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The world of animated films and comic art

Funnyworld

No. 21 $3.50

Screenwriter for a Duck

Carl Barks at the Disney Studio by Mike Barrier

An Interview with Will Eisner • John Canemaker on Suzan Pitt

"I'm six and a half inches tall and 200 pounds overweight but in just a few days Phil Kimmelman gave me poise, grace and movement. Eat your heart out Arthur Murray."

PK&A

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Editorial: Two Books, One Possum

By MIKE BARRIER

This issue's featured article, "Screenwriter for a Duck," is excerpted from *Carl Barks and the Art of the Comic Book*, the book on Barks that I completed last year. I regret to say that no date for publication of the book has yet been set; likewise, the price is still up in the air. The date and price will be announced in *Funnyworld*, and elsewhere, as soon as we know them.

The manuscript and 478 illustrations for my book on the Warner cartoons, *That's Not All, Folks: The Story of Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies*, were mailed to Warner Books on July 9. Publication is now scheduled for the fall of 1980. I will be revising the manuscript and searching for additional illustrations until the last buzzer sounds, but the bulk of the work is now done, and I will be concentrating for the next year or so on completing my long-overdue history of American animated cartoons for Oxford.

I have been derelict in not making *Funnyworld*'s readers aware of a publication that will surely be of interest to most of them. *The Okefenokee Star* is devoted to the work of Walt Kelly; it is published with the full cooperation of Kelly's estate, and is filled with rare photos, artwork, and articles. (*The Star* has reprinted all of the early Pogo strips that appeared in *The New York Star* in 1948 and 1949, for example.) Three

Funnyworld No. 21, Fall 1979 issue. Published quarterly. Mike Barrier, editor; Milton Gray, associate editor. All business correspondence (advertising, subscriptions, etc.) should be directed to *Funnyworld*, P.O. Box 1633, New York, N.Y. 10001. Editorial correspondence should be addressed to Mike Barrier, 226 N. Saint Asaph St., Alexandria, Va. 22314. ©1979 J. Michael Barrier. Nothing herein may be reproduced without written permission. For back issue information, please see page 5. For subscription information, please see page 7.

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On the Cover

This photo of Carl Barks with a feathered friend was taken around 1944 or 1945, a couple of years after Barks had left the Disney studio to begin writing and drawing the comic-book stories that have since made him famous. Barks's seven years at the Disney studio are described in an article by Mike Barrier starting on page 8.

Illustration Credits: photos and artwork for this issue were provided by Carl Barks, Homer Brightman, John Canemaker, Nelson Demorest, June Foray, Milt Gray, Dick Hall, Dick Huemer, Jack Kinney, Irv Levine, Ben Sharpsteen, and David R. Smith.

POGO
Walt Kelly
REE-SUMIN' OUR SCHOOLIN' - I GONE LECTURE ON NATURES CREATURES OF WHICH YOU IS PART AND PARTICIPLE.
BY JING, FROM THESE HOLLOWED HALLS OF IVY GO FORTH AND BECOME THE NOBLES' CREATURES OF NATURE.
HEY! WHERE Y'ALL GOIN', STUDENTS?
YOU SAY 'GO FORTH!' AN' NOT A MINUTE TOO SOON — WE BORED BUT GAME AN' ON OUR WAY.
I'M GOIN' THIRD AND YOU GOIN' FIFTH — I ACTUAL GOIN' FOURTH.
I'M A FIVE BETA BOY
HOLE ON! HOLE ON! THE STUDENT BODY CAN'T GO OFF WITHOUT A BIG MESS OF OL' HOMEWORK.
I GOT HOMEWORK-- MY BED GOT A MUSH-RAT FAMBLY IN IT--- GOTTA ROOOH 'EM OUT!

One of the early Pogo *strips reprinted in* The Okefenokee Star.

issues have been published to date; each is available for $4.00 from Swamp Yankee Studios, Box 2311, Bridgeport, Ct. 06608.

Errata. A typographical error made hash of a sentence on page 36 of *Funnyworld* No. 20, in David R. Smith's article on the pre-Burbank Disney studios. The sentence should have read as foliows: "So, they rigged up a bed sheet in front of Walt's office door."

The name of one of the principal characters in Dick Huemer's column in No. 20 was misspelled; it was Carl Edward "Bunny" *Schultze*—not "Schultz"—who drew the *Foxy Grandpa* comic strip in the early years of this century.

Letters to Mike Barrier

Michael Sporn was the supervisor of the assistant animators and in-betweeners during the production of Richard Williams's Raggedy Ann & Andy *in New York. He wrote in response to Shamus Culhane's letter about that film in* Funnyworld *No. 20.*

From MICHAEL SPORN: The behind-the-scenes story of *Raggedy Ann & Andy* seems more interesting to some people than the story that we had to live with on the screen. Now we have Shamus Culhane's letter, only the most recent in a never-ending surfeit of vituperative articles attempting desperately to accuse another for the many faults of that film.

Undoubtedly, there'll be another letter or 10 blaming someone else for the faults of an animated film that started simply enough and grew into a convoluted toadstool that read "eat me."

But Shamus shouldn't throw the first stone until he's sure someone isn't ready to drop a boulder on him. All of the

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WALT DISNEY'S
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

The Viking Press
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From Ralph Bakshi's Wizards *(1977).*

people who worked on the building of the leaning Tower of Pisa are guilty. But then that construction wouldn't be quite so famous were it not for the noted tilt, and perhaps that's where *Raggedy Ann*'s fame will lie. Generations from now, computer animators who would be "artists" will be talking about the film that almost was, and they'll carefully dissect the many and varied letters trying to determine whose fault was what!

Great talent went into the making of *Raggedy Ann & Andy*, and almost everyone who walked away from it called it a great learning experience. In point of fact, anyone who had his or her name on the credits of that film is to some extent responsible for the results. We all saw frequent-enough screenings of the film; we all were able to voice our opinion; we all saw the true making of the feature, and we all are guilty. The letters, attacks and complaints should all be directed at ourselves; anything beyond that is protection of our own egos.

Mark Evanier is the co-editor of Fanfare *magazine and has written many stories for Gold Key comic books.*

From MARK EVANIER: Two things bother me about your otherwise splendid publication (three, if you count bothersome things like publishing schedules, which I don't) and I'd like to unload them here.

First and foremost: don't you think you're getting a bit on the pontificating side with your reviews? Ain't no one who liked *Wizards* less than I did; in fact, I've yet to find merit in a single Bakshi concoction. But you just about had me feeling sorry for the poor guy. I've read a fair amount of your often perceptive writing and it strikes me that you don't care for much in the way of animation, save for a handful of Disney and Warner Brothers goodies. Your lambasting of Bakshi for not measuring up to these standards reminds me of those animation die-hards who write the whole Hanna-Barbera/Filmation/Et Cetera Saturday morning product off as drek because it doesn't match up to what Disney did, 30 years ago. But that's a whole other argument, really. What I'm getting at is that you have set standards that are just about impossible to attain. Your review of *Metamorphoses* was amazing. You start by saying, "It is not quite fair to review *Metamorphoses* at this time," then you proceed to savage it and its director-writer. I must say it takes guts to come out and attack a movie which has already flopped; which its owners are currently re-editing into another

Funnyworld Back Issues

Funnyworld started out as a rather informal type of production — it was a mimeographed newsletter for a small group of enthusiasts. As time went on, its format and scope changed, and its circulation went up. Issues #1 through #11 were originally mimeographed, while the others were offset printed. The notes on each issue are only a guide. Most issues include letters and reviews. Issues #1 through #16 are out of print, so we will send you photocopies.

ISSUES 1 THROUGH 5 1941-1966 Warner Bros. Cartoon Comic Book Index; review of **A Sign for Cain** by Frederic Wertham; Roy Rogers visits Little Rock, Arkansas; Funny Animal Quiz; Our Gang Comic Index; other Dell/Gold Key comic indexes; Disney's Death. 60 pages (October 1966 through April 1967).

ISSUES 6 THROUGH 8 These issues are almost totally devoted to the Carl Barks Bibliography. 92 pages (June 1967 through December 1967).

ISSUES #9 AND #10 More Barks material; a speech by Chuck Jones entitled, "Animation, the Naked Art". 99 pages (May 1968 through November 1968).

ISSUE #11 More Barks material. 73 pages (May 1969).

ISSUE #12 Notes on undergound comics; interview with Bob Clampett; more Barks material. 50 pages (1970).

ISSUE #13 Interview with Chuck Jones; interview with Carl Stalling; more Barks material; Milt Gray on the impact of computer animation and home video cassettes. 56 pages (1971).

ISSUE #14 The filming of **Fritz the Cat**; reviews of underground comics; I. Klein on his first job at the Hearst studio; Ub Iwerks, 1901-1971, by David Smith; more Barks material. 50 pages (1972).

ISSUE #15 The Filming of **Fritz the Cat**, Part II; Katz's Catastrophe by John Fawcett; Tex Avery article, by Joe Adamson; **Heavy Traffic**; more Barks material. 50 pages (1973).

ISSUE # 16 More Barks material; Working for the Fleischers — An Interview With Dick Huemer; Underground Comics in Europe. 44 pages (1974).

ISSUE #17 The Disney Studio During WW II; Roy Williams interview; Dick Huemer's work with Disney. 50 pages (1977).

ISSUE #18 Oscar Fischinger, by John Canemaker; column by Dick Huemer; animation voices over the last 50 years; the composers for Disney's shorts, by Ross Care. 54 pages (Summer 1978).

ISSUE #19 Richard Williams Animating Frank Frazetta; Eric Knight at Disney's Studio; reviews of the Ottawa and Filmex festivals; Disney's Kansas City studio. 56 pages (Fall 1978).

ISSUE #20 Fifty years of Disney Animation; Dick Huemer's column; **The Black Cauldron**; the Charles Mintz studio; George Griffin; Disney's Kingswell and Hyperion studios; reviews of **Lord of the Rings**, **Watership Down**. 56 pages (Summer 1979).

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movie. What takes even more guts is to write off the new version before they've even finished cutting it. And your review of *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* may well be the most negative positive review I've ever read. How dare these people not include precisely the strips Mike Barrier approves of, and in their proper amounts. You decide that the book "purports to be showing us the best," then are inflamed that they include bad strips which might be more apropos to a historical survey-type book. Gee, Mike, my copy sure looks like someone involved with the book intended it to be a historical survey-type book. In fact, I was laboring under the delusion that the Smithsonian Press specialized in historical survey-type books. Shows you what I know.

Oddly enough, my complaint above ties in with complaint No. 2. And let me preface this by saying that I love the works of Carl Barks, that I own tons of his funnybooks, that I have visited and chatted with the man and that I think the world of him. I think you are to be commended for the fine work you have done to help Carl get this due recognition. You and Bill Spicer and Malcolm Willits and the Thompsons and a few others and, I'd like to think, I have helped spread the word about who he is and what he did. But I sometimes feel quite alone in my contention that there were other good writers and artists on the Disney/Warner Brothers/Walter Lantz/MGM licensed comic books produced by Western Publishing. I was shocked (well, not shocked; let's say *surprised*) a few months ago when I introduced your associate editor to Tony Strobl and Milt had no idea who he was. Assuming that Barks was the best Duck Man in the comics, then Tony must certainly rank as No. 2 and there *are* some folks, who, even if they don't know Tony's name, like his version of Donald better than Barks's. I can think of very few instances where Tony Strobl's name has ever appeared in a fanzine unless I put it there. It would be nice if *Funnyworld* could blaze the way for some recognition of men like Tony and Roger Armstrong and Al Hubbard and Harvey Eisenberg and Pete Alvarado and John Carey and Kay Wright and Paul Murry and Jack Bradbury and Bill Wright and Phil DeLara and Jack Manning and so many others. Or do you believe that Disney comic books have been so popular for so long simply because of Carl Barks?

Now, how this ties in with my first point is like this: it strikes me as incongruous (at least) that *Funnyworld* should take such a lofty, critical stance towards animation and all comic books except those by Barks and maybe Stanley or Kelly. You have put Barks into *Funnyworld*, into a book, into the limelight...into everything but perspective.

There are a lot of myths among the legions of Barksophiles (to coin a word we could all live without). One is the myth that Barks worked in a vacuum; that everything he did, he did with no help whatsoever—but occasional interference—from the Western Publishing editors. For instance, Barks fans think that each and every one of the many deleted pages that float about was deleted by unfeeling editors, tampering with his work. In point of fact, many of those pages were deleted by Barks himself and the ones that were cut by editors were usually cut for pretty good reasons. Similarly, there is the belief that the two widely-circulated unpublished stories (the Christmas one and the "milkman" one) were "censored." Chase Craig, who was Barks's editor and good friend for many years (also mine), told me that those two were dropped because the editors considered them sub-standard. And, upon reading them, I am inclined to agree. Even Rembrandt had a worst painting. I would think that, even if they did leave him mostly alone, his editors deserve some recognition. Sometimes, the best contribution an editor can make to a creative work is to know when to leave it alone.

I look forward to your book on Carl and I hope that it will not perpetuate these myths. I hope that it will not be page upon page of Barks canonization with no discernment of Barks's contribution to the world of Disney comics as a whole. And I certainly hope that you will apply to Carl's work some of the same skepticism with which you approach a review of anything else.

See, Mike? You're not the only person who can review a book or movie before it comes out.

MIKE BARRIER replies: The point of my review of *Metamorphoses* was summed up in the following two sentences: "The basic problem with *Metamorphoses* is not that it is confusing to audiences. The film itself is so confused that adding narration and eliminating empty footage (and there is a lot of that) will not make much difference." When a film is rotten to the core, as *Metamorphoses* is, cosmetic changes cannot make it into "another movie."

Funnyworld is not a consumer's guide for animation fans. Its reviews are written primarily for people who have seen the films (if they have the opportunity) and are interested in serious discussion of them, rather than for kids who are trying to decide what to see on Saturday night. That is why a review of *Metamorphoses* was appropriate for No. 19, even though the original version of the film had been withdrawn from circulation months before that issue was published.

The point of my review of *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* was that the book, although excellent in many respects, fell short when measured against the standards that the editors had set for themselves.

Kim Weston's article in *Funnyworld* No. 16 on Barks's unpublished work made clear which pages had been deleted by Barks's editors and which by Barks himself. My book likewise draws that distinction.

I agree that the "milkman" story, at least, is not on a par with Barks's best work—even his best work of the late fifties, when the quality of all of his stories was no longer on the high level of the late forties and early fifties. But the "milkman" story was rejected as "sub-standard" at a time when dozens of stories not as well drawn or as well written were being published without question. The "milkman" story's real sin was that it is so biting and even bitter; blandness has been the greatest single virtue in the eyes of almost all comic-

book editors for the last 25 years or so, since the great comic-book scare of the early fifties, and the "milkman" story is not at all bland.

Barks's relationship with his editors is discussed in some detail in the book.

I have great affection for work by some of the comics artists mentioned in Evanier's letter—Bill Wright's Mickey Mouse stories of the late forties, for example, and Roger Armstrong's Porky Pig stories from the same period. But to suggest that the work of these cartoonists in any way approached that of Carl Barks is not to elevate them, but to drag Barks down.

The best comics and animated cartoons can stand up to severe critical scrutiny. Most comics and animated cartoons cannot; but that does not make the case for lower standards, but for better work. It has been my experience that the people in animation and the comics who care about what they are doing usually appreciate an informed, intelligent response to their work, even when praise and criticism are mingled. It is the hacks and the frauds who chant, "Boost, don't knock!"

From KENNETH D. CLARK: I am writing a light-hearted history of early British animation based on taped interviews with the pioneers, and backed up with material held in our National Film Archives and British Library. Certain American animators visited our island to work: R. L. Anderson, known here by the nickname "Vet," Dick Freil, and George Moreno. Information about these men is urgently required, together with anything on others of whom I am unaware. I have deliberately omitted David Hand and Ralph Wright who came here after the war to start G. B. Animation for Sir J. Arthur Rank. They have been well documented.

Vet Anderson was here in the early twenties working freelance and for Kine Komedy Kartoons. Dick Freil worked with Charles (Joe) Noble and his brother George on a Tom Webster series, "Tishy the X-Legged Horse." Moreno started a small unit after the war and made six "Bubble & Squeak" cartoons before failing. He went into advertising with cartoon shorts and then returned to the U.S.A.

If anyone can come up with further details I would be delighted to hear from them.

Clark's address is 91 Westlea Avenue, Watford, Herts., WD2 4NJ, England.

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These two publicity photos were taken in front of the storyboard for Good Scouts *(1938), one of the first Disney cartoons on which Barks worked as a story man. In the group photo Harry Reeves is seated on the floor making faces, and Barks is standing behind him holding the pointer. Half of the other people in the photo have not been identified, but standing, from left, are Roy Williams, T. Hee , and Ed Penner; Peter O'Crotty is seated in front of Penner. In the closer shot of Barks, Reeves, and an unidentified man, it is as clear as it is from the other photo that Reeves was the ham of the two.*

Screenwriter for a Duck

Carl Barks at the Disney Studio

By MIKE BARRIER

In the first half of the nineteen-thirties, Carl Barks worked for the *Calgary Eye-opener*, a little Minneapolis-based magazine that specialized in mildly risque humor.

"I was there for four years, doing that work," he said in a 1973 interview. "It just got to where I was doing all of it. Toward the last there, I was practically writing the whole thing. We bought a few gags, at a dollar a gag, and two dollars a gag, and so on. Very little of that. I got a hundred dollars a month, I think.

"I worked for the *Eye-Opener* until 1935, and I could see that the Depression was going to keep right on going forever, and that little magazine was just barely skinning by. I read somewhere that Disney was needing guys—it was in a newspaper column, I think—so I sent this bunch of cartoons and old page proofs to Disney's and got a letter right back, telling me to come out for the start of their November class. It was a tryout, in which you worked one month, and you went to their art class, and you looked at their animation, and you did a few in-betweens, and that sort of thing. At the end of one month, they picked out the ones that were likely to make the grade, and those that weren't were given their walking papers. Of the seven that went to work with my bunch, there were four of us that made it, I believe."

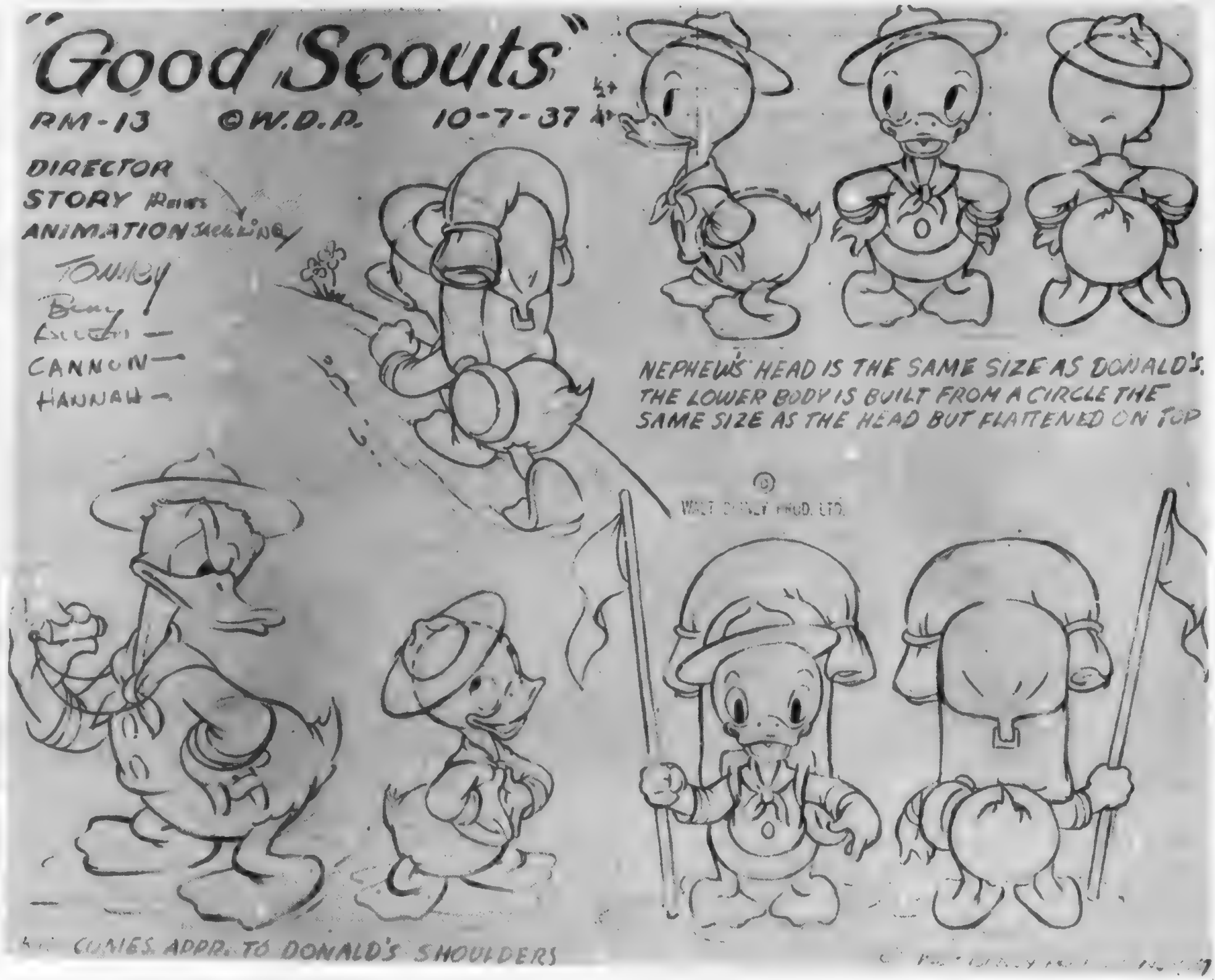
Barks was almost 35 years old when he was hired by the Disney studio—considerably older than many of the young artists who were joining the Disney staff at that time. People like Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, and Ward Kimball—all of them at least 10 years younger than Barks, and all of them to become brilliant animators—had been working at the studio for more than a year when Barks went on the payroll. He began as an in-betweener—filling in drawings between those made by the animators and their assistants—and found the work heavy going.

"I began turning in scripts, or gags, for the comic strip, and selling those to the comic-strip department, as a sort of a sideline. I was attracting a little attention that way. The story department would send over a little outline of a story, just an idea of a story that they were going to try to make into a seven-minute short subject, and ask the guys for gags, any little situation on these stories that we could think of, so all of us guys would turn in gags. I was beginning to turn in some pretty good gags, and finally I turned in the gag of the barber chair in *Modern Inventions*. Walt paid me fifty dollars for the gag. He seemed to get the idea that I should be working in the story department, rather than over in animation."

Modern Inventions (1937) is a cartoon in which Donald Duck enters a museum of modern inventions and runs afoul of the robots there. In Barks's gag—which closes the cartoon—Donald is pinned upside down in a robot chair; the feathers on his fanny are being trimmed and combed, and shoe polish applied to his head. Donald's squawking protests are counter-pointed against the robot barber's recorded chatter.

"The first thing that happened to me from animation was to go over to work with Jack King, who was a director. Jack had just been brought back to the studio from Schlesinger's at that point, and told to make *Modern Inventions*. So for about two months, he and I worked up the story for *Modern Inventions*. When that went into animation, I was put in a little room and told to think up another story. I wasn't getting very far very fast, so Walt, or Ted Sears, or one of the guys in the department, said, 'Barks is just wasting his time here, he'd better be put with somebody like Harry Reeves, who has had a lot of story experience, and then his wild thoughts will be directed along usable lines.' That's how I happened to be put with Harry Reeves. We worked as a team for a number of years." Chuck Couch, a former animator, also worked with Reeves and Barks.

Around the time the studio moved from its old Hyperion Avenue location to the new plant in Burbank, Barks was paired with Jack Hannah, another former animator. While he was with Hannah, Barks had the title of "story director," and was technically the man in charge, but neither he nor Hannah seems to have paid any attention to such questions of rank. (Barks had also been the story director for some cartoons when he was with Reeves and Couch—but the title had even less meaning then, since Reeves out-ranked him as "associate producer.")


"Good Scouts"
RM-13 ©W.D.P. 10-7-37
DIRECTOR
STORY Rauch
ANIMATION Hulling
Tommy
Benny
CANNON—
HANNAH—
NEPHEWS' HEAD IS THE SAME SIZE AS DONALD'S. THE LOWER BODY IS BUILT FROM A CIRCLE THE SAME SIZE AS THE HEAD BUT FLATTENED ON TOP
CURVES APPR. TO DONALD'S SHOULDERS

©Walt Disney Productions

A model sheet for Good Scouts.

Barks worked on the stories for about three dozen cartoons, most of them directed by Jack King, who directed virtually all of the Donald Duck cartoons made before and during World War II.

Of the Disney cartoons on which Barks worked—and I have seen most of them—I know of none that has a distinctively "Barksian" flavor, if "Barksian" is defined with reference to his best comic-book stories. One reason for this, of course, is that many hands were involved in the making of these cartoons. Jack King was a stodgy director, who sacrificed every other consideration in order to stage the gags in his cartoons clearly; watching them is like listening to a comedian enunciate the words very slowly and precisely as he tells a joke.

King's direction usually made the gags in his cartoons seem worse than they were—quite an accomplishment, since many of the gags were terrible. This is especially noticeable in the earlier cartoons, the ones on which Barks worked with Harry Reeves, but contrived gags turn up in the later cartoons as well. In *Donald's Snow Fight* (1942), for example, Donald is pursuing the nephews, who take refuge in their snow fort. Donald slams into mattress springs on the gate of the fort; he bounces across a frozen lake like a stone skipping across the water; he hits a tree, and icicles form a cage around him; and snow falls on him and makes him look like a rhinoceros. Any one of these ideas might have been tolerable in isolation; in their cumulative effect, in a few seconds of screen time, they are insufferable, especially as presented by King.

One would like to blame Barks's partners in the story department for such stuff, but the fault was probably as much his as theirs. He was, after all, fresh from the *Eye-Opener*, where gags were everything. Jack Hannah said in 1976 that Barks had "a natural talent for cartoon work," but it was still developing; as Hannah also remarked, "Some of it was too far

©Walt Disney Productions

An aerial photo of the Walt Disney studio on Hyperion Avenue in Los Angeles, taken around 1939, shortly before the studio moved to Burbank. Barks has identified the buildings in which he worked: "1. The Annex. This was the first annex building erected across Hyperion from the main studio. Art classes were taught in the part with the slanted roof. In-betweeners and trainees filled the small rooms on the north side of the long hall. 2. From the in-betweens section of the annex I was moved to a room in this small building to do story work for Jack King on Modern Inventions. *3. Most years in the story department were spent in these buildings, which were apartment houses that Walt bought and remodeled into surprisingly roomy story units. 4. Additional annex buildings which were built around 1939. For some months the duck and Pluto units had rooms there."*

out sometimes; you'd have to watch him on continuity." While he was at the Disney studio, Barks was not a consummate story-teller, and he showed few signs of becoming one.

The single most important inhibiting factor may have been Donald Duck's screen personality, which was already well established by the time Barks became a Disney story man. Even though Donald had first appeared only about two years earlier, in a 1934 Silly Symphony called *The Wise Little Hen*, he was pegged as a terrible-tempered little quacker in his second film, *The Orphans' Benefit*, and it was that basic pattern that Barks had to work with. Rather than Barks influencing the course that Donald took on the screen, it was the other way around; it is the screen Donald we see in the first few years of Barks's comic-book stories. I have always found the screen Donald an unattractive character—he is too much the stupid bully and practical joker—and until Barks began to transform him into a much richer, funnier character, the comic-book stories were held down as if by lead weights.

It seems unlikely that Barks could have effected a similar change in the animated Donald if he had remained at the studio. His future at Disney's was limited. His lack of animation experience—and what he describes as his inability to picture a story in his mind as if it had already been animated—would have prevented him from ever becoming a director. He was pigeonholed as a "duck man"; he worked briefly with Chuck Couch and Ken Hultgren on *Bambi*, but then was ordered back to work on Duck pictures. He protested—"I felt that I was in with the guys who were really producing the future" — but to no avail. "Maybe it was six weeks I was on that; I don't think we produced one single thing that ever appeared in the movie."

When Barks and I were talking in 1973 about his work on

Bambi, he described a gag that he and Couch had devised. It is apparently the gag that is reproduced in Robert D. Feild's 1941 book, *The Art of Walt Disney*, as Plate 26, "The Way to Crack a Nut": a squirrel tells a chipmunk to crack a nut in the fork of a limb, and the chipmunk tries to crack the nut while it is still in his mouth. Hultgren, as a "story sketch man," probably made finished sketches for this gag from rough sketches by Barks and Couch. This was a luxury that Barks had not enjoyed on the Duck shorts, where his own rough sketches made up the storyboard. ("We never made beautiful layouts or things like they did for *Snow White*, where they had draftsmen working with the different story men, and each gag man had his draftsman who did a beautiful, detailed drawing of the simplest gag. If it was nothing more than Dopey wriggling his nose, there was a $2,000 painting.")

When Barks and I were looking at the plate in the Feild book, he suggested another reason why his departure from the Disney studio was inevitable. "These guys who could visualize stuff in action," he said, "they were much better at thinking up that type of gag than I was."

What type of gag came most naturally to him? I asked.

"Well," he said, "I would have thought of the gag, but I wouldn't have seen all of these sketches as being necessary in putting it over." He would have drawn one sketch, he said, "and that would have been it."

In other words, he was more interested in getting an idea across in a single drawing than in elaborating it in a series of drawings. He summed up his attitude neatly in a 1977 letter: "I was a PLOT man. Animation gags were long and tiresome to me. I wanted to see movement from one situation to another rather than movement revolving endlessly within one situation."

Disney cartoons are by no means plotless; in fact, their beginnings, middles and ends are more clearly defined than those in the cartoons of most other studios. But, as Barks suggests, it is how the plot is used that makes the difference. Disney plots typically were designed to set up situations that the animators could exploit. In *On Ice* (1936), for example, Donald puts ice skates on the sleeping Pluto, and lures him onto the ice. In a story of the kind that Barks later wrote and drew for comic books, this would be but the prelude to a whole string of complications, culminating in some comic catastrophe. But in *On Ice*, Pluto is given his skates so that he can go through painful struggles to right himself and return to solid ground,

Barks as a Disney Story Man: A Filmography

The following is a list of the Disney cartoons on which Carl Barks worked as a story man, according to his own records. The date in parentheses is the cartoon's release date.

In some cases, Barks's role in the work on a story is specified in an outline that was distributed throughout the studio before work on the story was completed; copies of such outlines have been preserved in the Disney Archives. The initials "SD" after a cartoon's release date indicate that, according to an outline, Barks was the story director on the cartoon. The initials "SC" indicate that he was identified as a member of the story crew, technically subordinate to a story director—although as Barks and other former Disney story men have said, such distinctions were not much honored at the time.

Typically, a year or more would elapse between the circulation of an outline and the release of the finished cartoon; for example, the outline for *Sea Scouts* was distributed on March 26, 1938, and the cartoon was released on June 30, 1939.

Modern Inventions (May 29, 1937)
Donald's Ostrich (December 10, 1937)
Self Control (February 11, 1938)
Donald's Better Self (March 11, 1938) SC
Donald's Nephews (April 15, 1938) SC
Good Scouts (July 8, 1938) SC
Donald's Golf Game (November 4, 1938) SC
Donald's Lucky Day (January 13, 1939) SC
The Hockey Champ (April 28, 1939) SD
Donald's Cousin Gus (May 19, 1939) SD
Sea Scouts (June 30, 1939) SD
Donala's Penguin (August 11, 1939) SC
The Autograph Hound (September 1, 1939) SC
Mr. Duck Steps Out (June 7, 1940)
Bone Trouble (June 28, 1940)
Put-Put Troubles (July 19, 1940)
Donald's Vacation (August 9, 1940)
Window Cleaners (September 20, 1940)
Fire Chief (December 13, 1940)
Timber (January 10, 1941)
The Golden Eggs (March 7, 1941)
Early to Bed (July 11, 1941)
Truant Officer Donald (August 1, 1941)
Old MacDonald Duck (September 12, 1941)
Chef Donald (December 5, 1941)
The Village Smithy (January 16, 1942)
Donald's Snow Fight (April 10, 1942)
Donald Gets Drafted (May 1, 1942)
The Army Mascot (May 22, 1942)
The Vanishing Private (September 25, 1942)
Sky Trooper (November 6, 1942)

Barks as caricatured by his co-workers.

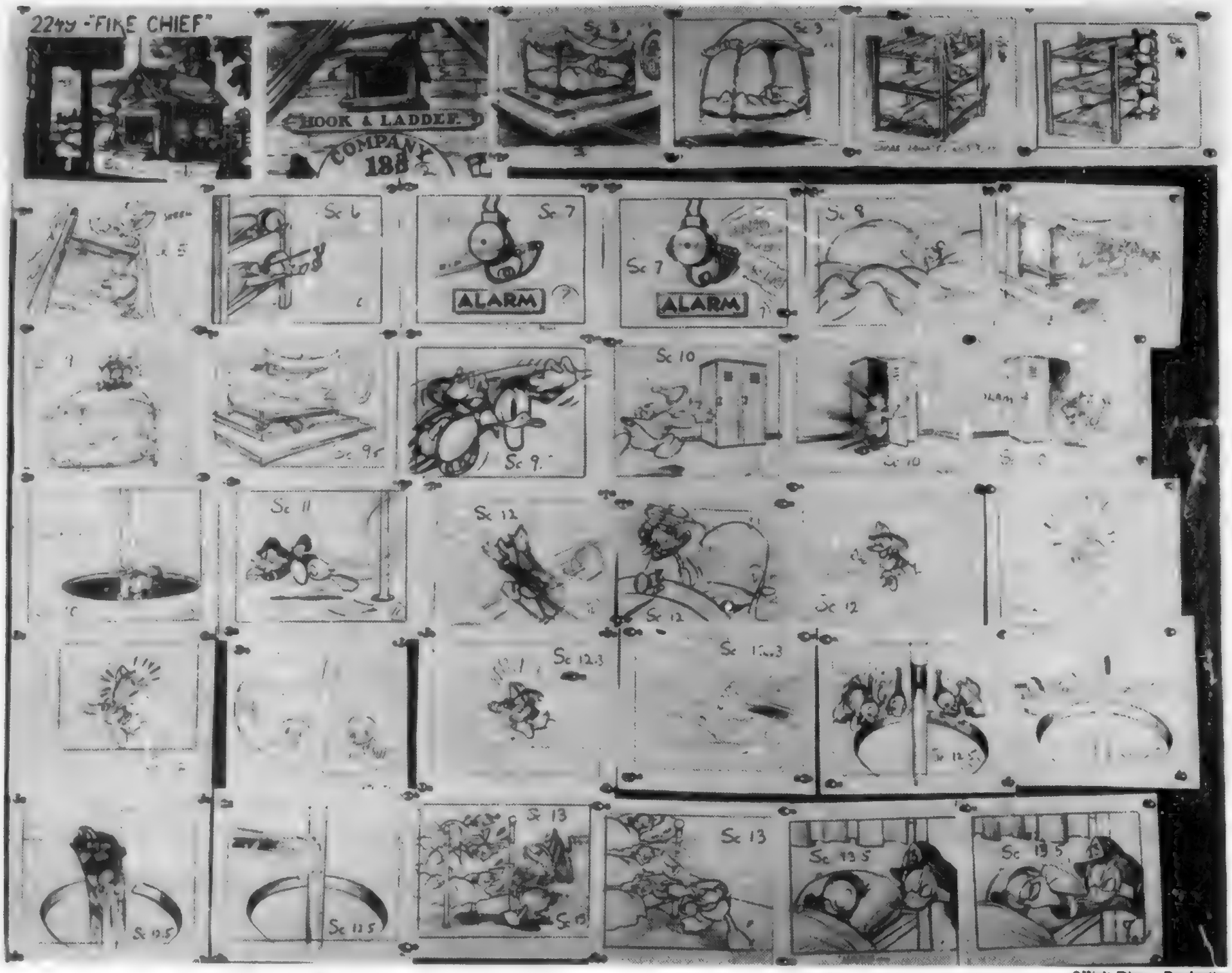
Bellboy Donald (December 18, 1942)
The Old Army Game (November 5, 1943)
Home Defense (November 26, 1943)
Trombone Trouble (February 18, 1944)
The Plastics Inventor (September 1, 1944)

Trombone Trouble had the working title *Superman Duck* at the time Barks was involved with it.

All of the above cartoons were directed by Jack King, with the following exceptions: *Sea Scouts*, Dick Lundy; *Bone Trouble*, Jack Kinney; *Put-Put Troubles*, Riley Thompson; *The Golden Eggs*, Wilfred Jackson; *The Village Smithy*, Dick Lundy; *The Army Mascot*, Clyde Geronimi.

All of the cartoons on the list are Donald Duck cartoons except for *Bone Trouble* and *The Army Mascot*, both of which star Pluto.

Barks's records show that he worked on cartoon stories listed under the titles "Northwest Mounted," "Prospector," "Balloon," "Shooting Gallery," "Beaver Hunt," and "Salesman," all of which were shelved. The Disney Archives has material—sketches, outlines, gag suggestions, or story meeting notes—matching all of these titles except "Salesman," and has an outline with Barks's name on it and sketches for a cartoon that was to have been titled *Donald Munchausen*.



©Walt Disney Productions

Storyboard drawings for Fire Chief *(1940), one of the Donald Duck cartoons on which Barks worked.*

all beautifully animated by Norman Ferguson. Donald comes to grief, and all of *On Ice*'s strands are pulled together in the closing seconds, but the story remains basically an excuse for the animation. The animation is the reason for the cartoon's existence, it is not simply the means of telling the story.

By contrast, Barks is primarily a writer; his drawings have always been the servants of the ideas he wanted to get across. When he was working at the Disney studio, those ideas had not yet taken the form of richly humorous stories; he was still thinking more of gags than of stories. But still, it is little wonder that he found the Disney priorities skewed.

In 1942, Barks decided to leave the Disney studio. World War II had just begun, and the studio was rapidly becoming a war plant; at one point, more than 90 per cent of the footage it was producing was for the military.

"It was when they were starting to put badges on everybody, and we were going to have to check in at the gate every morning, and we couldn't have any gasoline to drive anywhere. You were just going to be locked in there for the duration, and I just didn't think I wanted to be locked into that place for the duration."

The studio's air conditioning also bothered him; he had had an operation to relieve his sinuses not long before he decided to leave.

Barks had no appetite for the military films the studio was making. "We were working on one about medicine, and the way germs invade the body. They were getting lined up for some war picture on gun barrels, or something like that. I couldn't see myself getting tied up with that sort of thing. The war was a very unpopular subject with me, anyway. I had seen one generation of young men marched off to war—World War I—and I was stupid enough that I wanted to get into it, but I was just a little too young. And then comes this Second World War, and I had learned my lesson in the meantime. When I saw how little we had accomplished with World War I, I thought, why in the devil kill off another whole generation of young men to accomplish the same result?"

He left the studio on November 6, 1942, moved to San Jacinto, a town east of Los Angeles, with his second wife, and set up a chicken farm. He had sold a few magazine cartoons while he was at Disney's, and now he began selling more. And most important, "I wrote to Western Publishing, and told them that I had left the studio, and that I was available in case they had anything they wanted done."

Suzan Pitt as caricatured by John Canemaker.

Suzan Pitt

Moving, Changing, and Animating

By JOHN CANEMAKER

The loft is located on Broadway in the soon-to-be-chic Tribeca area of lower Manhattan. *Objets d'art*, a refrigerator, shelving, boxes of drawings, furniture—a couple of antique desks, an oval walnut dinner table and chairs bought in Minnesota years ago when a bargain was a bargain—nterrupt the oceanic space or cling timidly to the walls, as if afraid to test the water.

Suzan Pitt sits and talks and smokes yet another cigarette. She is 35 and deceptively fragile. She is small-boned and has very intelligent, very blue eyes that peer coolly out of a white translucent face framed by cascading auburn hair. She gives no outward indication of the passionate forces that have given form to her nomadic life and would have ruled it were they not tempered by an iron-willed discipline and an equally passionate drive to create art. She has taken a five-year lease on the loft and it is the longest commitment to one place she has ever made in her life, a life that has stretched from Kansas City, Detroit, St. Paul and University, Alabama, to Amsterdam, Boston and now New York, from where she commutes back and forth to Fountain City, Wisconsin, to

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John Canemaker is an independent animator and filmmaker whose articles on Elfriede Fischinger and George Griffin appeared in earlier issues of Funnyworld.

visit her 10-year-old son, Blue, and her ex-husband, Alan Kraning.

"I've let my life get spread out sometimes and I've had to pull it back together," she says calmly. "I haven't been a person who has made a life which is steady or had one place to live—china in the cabinet year after year in a place that I've felt was always my own. I've moved a lot, been unsatisfied with where I was at. Moved and changed, physically and emotionally as well. The film was the thing that was steadfast. It was on-going, no matter where I moved or what I was doing. It was a constant in my life."

"The film" to which Pitt refers is the extraordinary *Asparagus*, one of the most lavish and wonderous animated shorts ever made. The short enjoyed a rare dual debut at two prestigious art galleries in January 1979: the Whitney Museum of American Art (accompanied by an exhibition of 50 paintings and drawings from the film) and a simultaneous screening and exhibition of "constructions" (cels) at the Holly Solomon Gallery in Soho. *Asparagus* is an overwhelming visual experience not easily described. Basically, it is a 19-minute visual poem dealing with a woman artist's creative process and rites of passage. It is not a narrative, but rather a series of episodes full of obsessively detailed, lush, and sensual imagery. The audience becomes hypnotized, voyeurs peeping in on a private dream.

Structurally, *Asparagus* is a giant film loop. "It could well repeat itself over and over," wrote Pitt in the Whitney Museum program notes. (Pitt's experience with looping and alternative methods of exhibiting film includes a show she organized while teaching animation at Harvard in 1976. Called *Loops*, the show was an attempt by Pitt and her students to release animation from its obligations to single-plane illusion by combining real objects and sets with film loops to convert the illusion of discontinuous film time into "real" time.) The circularity of *Asparagus* was extended to its exhibition at the Whitney; there, audiences watched the film screened within the miniature theatre in which parts of it were created. Most of the animation was done on highly rendered cels over detailed surreal watercolor backgrounds; however, the latter part of the film takes place in a three-dimensional 10-foot theatre with 200 tiny seats in which are seated as many restlessly moving clay puppets facing a procenium containing animated stage illusions. In this sequence, cels were matted into the 3-D set. "I made this film to an object," wrote Pitt. "In exhibiting the film this way I've hoped to create a situation in which people will feel a physical distance...I want the audience to always know the illusions are being made by successive drawings through time—that I'm not trying to make an illusion they can 'believe' in."

Asparagus required four years and three grants to pull together. Judging by the formidable amount of labor and time demanded of the filmmaker (aided by a few loyal assistants), Suzan Pitt would seem to be the world's most patient person. "What I am," she says, "is impatiently persistent. This film was really backbreakingly hard work. Lots of times I wished it was finished but I didn't feel so impatient that I wanted to end it quickly or shortcut it in any way." *Asparagus* is the culmination of a decade of Pitt's persistent exploration of the medium of animation as a means to realizing her painterly private visions.

She was born in Kansas City, the daughter of a local tire company owner. The only "artist" in the family before Suzan came along in 1943 was her grandmother, who in the late nineteen-thirties "made beautiful hats in her own little shop." Suzan had always drawn as a child: "It was something I had a feeling for, felt I could do well. The thing I would do when everything seemed like it went wrong. If I felt hurt or like closing myself in, I would go upstairs and lock the door and make pictures. It was really an escape."

Pitt elaborates on the familiar theme of the sensitive child protecting itself from a bruising reality through art: "It's so hard to talk about. As an adult it sounds neurotic to say I'm afraid of real life. But as children we take objects and move them around. Inanimate objects seem to have life. Do you remember playing with your fingers? I did it really a lot. Played with my doll house, toys out in the back yard. Making arrangements, making them talk and do things. Then as you grow up you're expected to take all that and make it disappear in the closet. What happens to that impulse, that drive to transfer what you see around you into playthings?"

Luckily, Suzan's drive to make visual order out of life through painting was encouraged, both at home and various schools, including Cranbrook Academy and the University of Alabama, where a teacher recognized her special talent and allowed her to have her "own space at college with a key." Pitt, working in oils, created large figurative paintings "this side of pop art." She made prints, created books, and painted objects; she was "impressed" by Richard Lindner, David Hockney, and Francis Bacon, "to some extent," for 1965 was a "hot period for British painters."

She is not sure from where the impulse came, but from 1968 on she was "making images through animation." Her paintings, she notes, had always appeared to be shapes "arrested in time." She also remembers a period at school in Alabama where she made a clear choice to paint instead of becoming an actress. "I discovered I was a ham," she says. "I have a feeling for drama and the stage—for *the show*!" Somehow these factors and others led her to read books on the techniques of bringing static images to life on film. She experimented in 8mm film with almost 400 drawings for six weeks. She found that although her highly rendered individual drawings "would take forever" to complete, full paintings could easily be moved under the camera frame-by-frame to achieve the effects she wanted.

Pitt was by this time married to Alan Kraning, an artist and filmmaker, who was teaching sculpture at the University of Minnesota. Pitt held several teaching jobs: at the Bloomfield Hills Art Association, St. Paul Art Center, Walker Art Center and eventually the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, where she changed her drawing/painting classes to animation classes and included the rental of a 16mm movie camera in the school budget. She now experimented in earnest and in 1969 completed *Bowl Theatre Garden Marble Game*, an early film that displays most of the stylistic trademarks evident in her

From Asparagus.

later work. There is the patient slow timing of the well-drawn cut-out graphics, the use of repetition, and images of vegetables, parts of the human anatomy, and the theatre. There is also the sensuality factor: a strong sexuality that emerges through naive and explicit graphic metaphors. Even Pitt's very first film experiments in 8mm dealt with symbols of bodily functions, sex, and birth—a bag contorts suggestively and releases an egg.

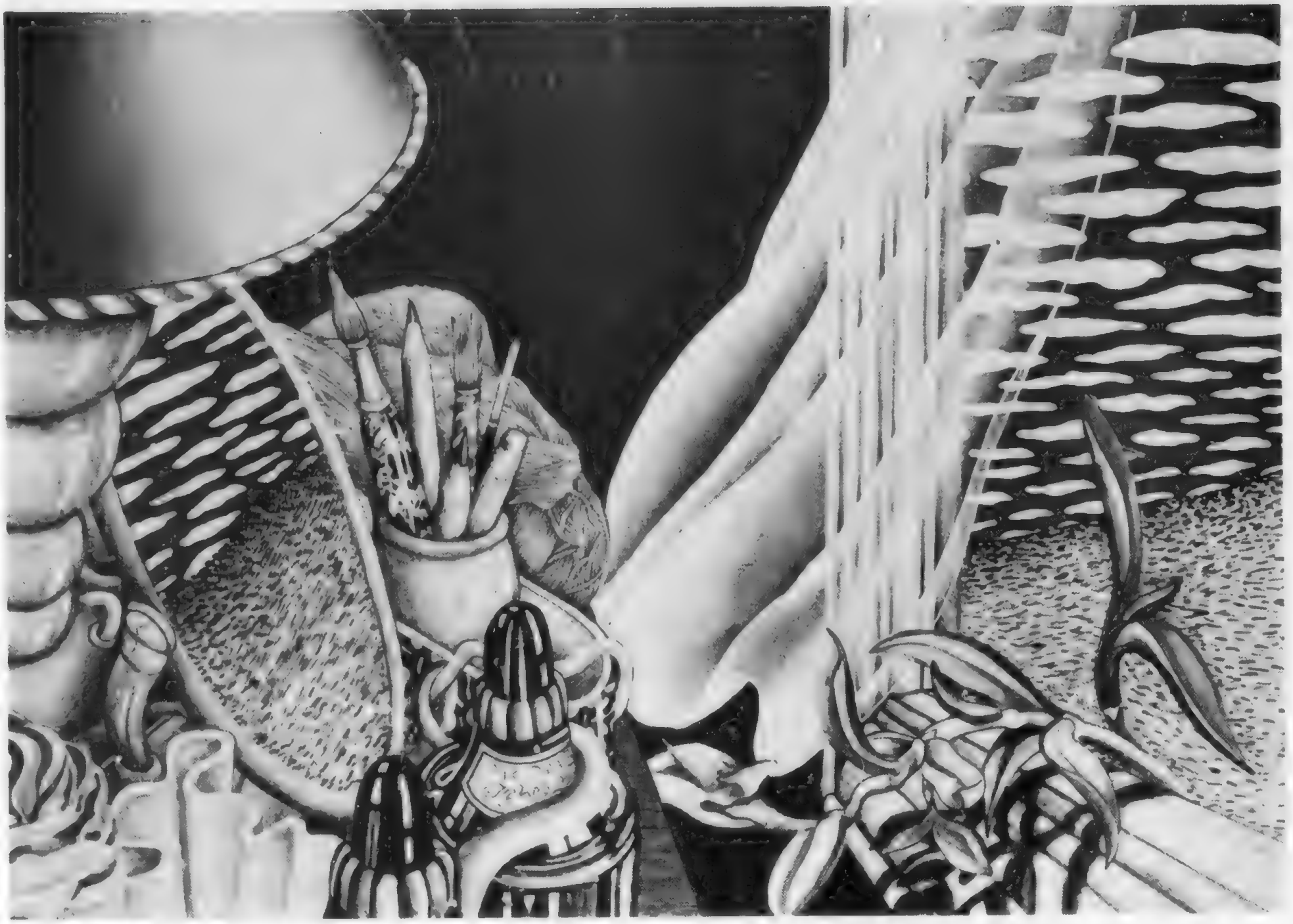
In *Crocus*, a film Pitt completed in 1971, a man with an erection that would be the envy of Priapus makes love to a woman (assumed to be his wife). Their bodies are hidden demurely under a blanket, while "love metaphors" of roses, butterflies, birds, a Christmas tree, cucumbers, and so on float in and out of doors and windows until interrupted by the cries of a child in another room. The lovers then give their attention and love of another kind to the child.

There is a libidinous sensibility in all of Pitt's work, a playful feeling of "naughty" daring and perhaps an attempt to astonish (or shock) us while hedging the titillation by using sexual symbols. Pitt recalls a strict Kansas upbringing where sex was not discussed; when Suzan first showed her family *Crocus*, her mother's reaction was shocked disapproval ("How *could* you do something like that?"). Years later, after a sort of reconciliation had been made between the filmmaker and her mother, the entire Pitt family (except for Suzan's father, who had died a few months before) turned up for the opening of *Asparagus* in New York. "I think the excitement from the audience helped my mother to see, well, look at all these people. They're really responding to this film. They're not embarrassed. I felt a response from her. She said, 'I don't know where all those things come from inside you. I can't myself trace it, but I'm really impressed. It's great!'" In the film, the asparagus represents "some sort of creative source" to Pitt. It is first defecated by the film's female character into a toilet and flushed away into the "watery past." In a thick exotic garden, the vegetable grows like erect phalli and the woman strokes it. "She wants so much to touch it, to embrace it, to make contact with it, to understand it," wrote Pitt in the Whitney notes. Later in the film the asparagus is sucked by the woman and is transformed between her lips into a waterfall, fireworks, steel filings, and sensual associations.

One newspaper film critic felt that feminists might find fault with *Asparagus*, with its woman placed in a service-oriented position to the symbol of masculinity and potency. Pitt disagrees: "I did think that making that kind of sensual erotic analogy might have been also nice in reverse—a feminine-looking shape being adored, touched or wondered at. But that's intellectual reasoning on my part. What I was saying was well said the way I was saying it!

Besides, I'm basically a heterosexual woman and that's my experience: a man with a woman and my being a woman. That's what I see. Someone with a different sexual experience would say it in a different way perhaps. I've always felt I had this strong mixture of masculine/feminine traits. A lot of artists do. Some people take on extreme masculine or feminine characteristics. I always felt I was a mixture. Sometimes I've even felt I was a third sex. I don't see an asparagus as purely phallic. I love the way it looks when its coming out ot the ground becuase it's completely formed, it stands up, looks ancient and yet fresh at the same time. But as it goes through its metamorphosis it grows up to become this beautiful, etheral, wafting-in-the-wind fern, which is more feminine."

It was *Crocus* that brought Suzan Pitt to the attention of



From Asparagus.

the Whitney museum and its then-developing independent filmmakers program. The Whitney featured the film in a program of shorts and commissioned Pitt to make a film commercial requesting funding for the Museum's Film Department.

In 1973 Pitt completed *Jefferson Circus Songs*, a pixillation film made with a cast of children who were her students at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. This mysterious, often puzzling bit of film whimsy contains elaborately costumed kids in bizarre three-dimensional settings performing Kabuki-like ceremonies. Pitt fills the screen with color, motion, and wonderfully rich images, like a magician pulling yet another astonishment from a bottomless hat. It is a miniature Fellini extravaganza—Cocteau on an acid trip.

As Pitt's film artistry was developing and gaining strength with each new film, her personal life was about to take a sharp turn. Two weeks after finishing *Jefferson Circus Songs*, she moved to the southern part of Holland. "I was in love with someone. I went there to live with him," she explains simply. The relationship proved to be "a total disaster" and after three months she left the man. For 13 months Pitt remained in Holland, a woman with a four-year-old son (she had brought Blue with her from the midwest) in a foreign country, without friends or means of support. "It was the real low point of my life," she says. "It took me a long time to get over getting a divorce (in 1974) and trying to straighten out my own life. Trying to find my own way without being stooped in loneliness and depression and feeling lost. I was down."

Slowly she began to meet people in Holland and made friends with a few artists and experimental filmakers. She showed her films at America House in Berlin; she heard of an available grant, met the committee in charge, showed them her films and drawings (the genesis of *Asparagus*) and won the grant, which involved a residency in Germany (eventually completed in 1978). "Things got better. They got a little worse," she says quietly. She went back to Fountain City, where her ex-husband was residing. "I have very good relations with Alan," Pitt says. "In fact it gets better all the time. We're still very close, supportive. We share bringing up Blue. It was worth the added pain to me in trying to stay close, in touch with each other, and readjust to new separate single lives. When you have a child with someone they're a key person in your life. It'll always be that way."

It was a production grant from the American Film Institute that allowed Pitt to start in on animating *Asparagus*. Then came an offer to teach for a year at Harvard, to be followed the next year there by a research fellowship. By the time she moved to Cambridge in 1975 she had the first section

of the film drawn. "I shot tests on the school Oxberry the summer before I started teaching. Eric Martin and Jim Shook literally showed me everything about the Oxberry camera including how to shoot bi-pack for the theatre scenes."

At first Pitt thought she could produce the film in one year for $5,000. "But," she says, "it probably has cost at least $15,000 and that's just minimal wages for cel painters, construction of the theatre set, film processing, composer's fee, finishing costs. The production time stretched out because I was teaching, moving around, and the idea of the film just grew larger and longer." In September 1977 Pitt had most of the film completed except for the superimposition of the cels over the 3-D theatre set sequence. She moved to new York and from September to December animated the final scenes. "It was exhausting," she recalls. "I'd break to go get something to eat, then come back to the loft and start in working again. I'd catch some sleep and wake up to start working on the film—constantly!"

Early in 1978, she flew to Germany to take advantage of the grant she had received three years before. "It was a generous honorarium, with a studio plus another $3,000 for finishing funds. It helped tremendously and I couldn't have done it without it. Jim Shook came over from Harvard for two months to paint cels. We went to a studio in Hamburg—Cinegraphic—and spent all of Easter using a 35mm aerial camera doing the superimposition of the cels over the theatre scene. It didn't come out technically as I wanted it to. We decided it was easier for Jim to take the drawings back and shoot them at Harvard, which he did."

Asparagus was finished with filming by September 1978 and Pitt hired composer Richard Teitelbaum, who contributed a hauntingly beautiful score that equals the visual ecstasy. "We never tried for any exact sync of music and picture," says Pitt. "We wanted the Moog synthesizer music to create an atmosphere but not to believe the sounds were coming from the source."

With the film finally completed, Pitt dashed, without a breath, into a headlong promotion and exhibition of the work at the aforementioned galleries, but also in film shows in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and places inbetween. She has recently received another grant, so a new film will be forthcoming. although she has not had the time to formulate any ideas for the project. "I haven't as yet put myself in a private atmosphere to start daydreaming again, which is where all these ideas come from," she will tell you.

She takes a few moments to daydream: "I'd like to spend some time making objects and pictures that don't move. I feel like I've always been painting. I seldom think about live-action. I used to think about it more when the moves and strains of my life were stranger and more powerful than any movie I've ever seen. And I'd think after a particular thing would happen: boy, if I made a film of *that* that would be a great film! I make too impetuous decisions about some things, I'm drawn to unusual people." She drifts back to her upcoming film project. "Maybe I'll do a tighter version of *Loops*. Build a theatre, set it up and take it down after the performance. Combine screens, actors, 3-D theatre pieces. Mechanical devices to move images, maybe not use film at all. A variety of ways of moving imagery, which all come from in and out of animation.

"And I think about making an animated feature, a truly experimental one. If I could somehow find the funding—in the $500,000 range. Ideally I'd do it all myself. Or work with two or three other independent animators. That would have a lot of problems, but the result could be good. If I could raise the money and had complete freedom to do exactly what I wanted to do, I want to do it!"

Sales and Rental Distribution Sources of Suzan Pitt Films

Canyon Cinema Room 220 Industrial Center Bldg. Sausalito, CA 94965	*Marble Game, Crocus, Cels, A City Trip, Whitney Commercial, Jefferson Circus Songs, Asparagus*
New York Filmmakers Co-op 175 Lexington Ave. New York, NY 10016	*Crocus, Jefferson Circus Songs*
Serious Business Co. 1609 Jaynes Street Berkeley, CA 94703	*Crocus, Jefferson Circus Songs, A City Trip*
New Line Cinema 121 University Place New York, NY 10003	*Crocus* (included in 2 programs of films titled "Best of the New York Women's Film Festival" and "The Erotic Cartoon Carnival")
The American Federation of Arts 41 East 65th Street New York, NY 10021	*Crocus* (included in a program of films titled "Highlights of the New American Filmmakers Series, Whitney Museum, N.Y.")
Nederlands Filmmuseum Vondel Park 3 Amsterdam, Nederlands	*Marble Game, Crocus, Cels, A City Trip, Whitney Commercial, Jefferson Circus Songs*
Cinemation 31 bis rue Jean Lolive 93500 Pantin, France	*Crocus, Whitney Commercial, Jefferson Circus Songs*
Suzan Pitt 392 Broadway New York, NY 10013	*Asparagus*
Picture Start 204½ W. John St. Champaign, Ill. 61820	*Asparagus*

Moved by The Spirit

An Interview with Will Eisner

By TOM ANDRAE

One of the famous Spirit stories that graced Sunday newspaper comic sections throughout the forties and early fifties concerns a nondescript nobody named Gerhard Shnobble. Shnobble's tragedy is that, although he performs the most incredible of human feats, flight, the world is oblivious to this. Schnobble dies an unknown.

Shnobble is the self-confessed alter-ego of Will Eisner, artist/writer/creator of the Spirit, who, like most other comic artists, labored in obscurity in a field that until recently has had little artistic respectability. Fortunately, Eisner's talents have at last been recognized. He is now acclaimed as a master innovator of the graphic story.

Born March 6, 1917, Eisner grew up and studied in New York City, whose urban blight, ethnic neighborhoods, and big-city graft provided the ambience for many Spirit stories. The son of a Viennese mural painter turned furrier and manufacturer, Eisner became interested in drawing at an early age. He attended DeWitt Clinton High School and received a scholarship to the Art Students League, where he studied painting, anatomy, and mechanical drawing.

In 1936, Eisner landed his first job as an artist with Hearst's *New York American*, writing and illustrating small advertisements. During that year Eisner tried everything from fashion, pulp, and commercial illustration before becoming an artist-writer for *Wow What a Magazine*, one of the earliest comic titles to utilize material especially created for comic books. With Jerry Iger, the former editor of *Wow*, Eisner started the first comic-book production shop, Eisner and Iger, Ltd., and began full-scale production of comic books to fill the breach in sales created by the pulp magazines' decline. The Eisner-Iger shop was responsible for creating the Fiction House line of comics, whose most memorable character was Sheena, Queen of the Jungle.

In 1939, Eisner sold his interest to his partner and set up shop with Everett "Busy" Arnold. Together they originated the Quality Comics line, Eisner being responsible for creating its stable of heroes—Plastic Man, Blackhawk, and Doll Man, characters written and drawn primarily by other artists. Eisner's most important creation was the masked crime-fighter, the Spirit, who was created for the first "newspaper comic book" to be distributed to major U. S. newspapers in the Sunday comics section. An immediate success, *The Spirit* provided a vehicle for Eisner's most innovative work as an artist-writer.

Although he did not draw the first original stories for comic books (original stories had previously appeared in Dell's *The Funnies* No. 1 and National Comics' *New Fun* No. 1), Eisner was among the first to grasp the medium's potential and to give it a new shape and direction. The earliest comic books were simply reprints of newspaper comics, and the first comic books with new material copied the newspaper strips. Consequently the art was frozen into the format of the newspaper strips. Panels were uniform, figures were kept safely within the frame, scenes were shown in conventional perspective. Eisner was the first to recognize the inherent flexibility of the comic panel. He would use a flurry of short panels to speed up action, and would show characters popping out of panels to add depth. The greatest influence on Eisner was the movies, as reflected in the unusual angle shots, the studied sense of pacing, and the dramatic lighting that characterize his work. Eisner even attempted to provide a sound track by visually depicting the sounds of clocks ticking, feet crunching through snow, or bullets ricocheting off boulders.

Eisner was as innovative a writer as he was an artist. He was the creator of what Jules Feiffer has called the "documentary fable"—a story seemingly authentic when read, but implausible after the fact. Only Eisner could make credible the story of a pet cockroach who squeals on his owner's killer just before the Spirit accidentally squashes him. Or the story of Sam, the plate, who gets thrown by the Spirit, is spotted as a flying saucer, and is finally blown up by inhabitants of the planet Mars who fear an attack.

That such stories were credible was due largely to Eisner's ability to create believable human beings rather than the cardboard characters that populate most comic books. The Spirit was no invincible superhero; he was often pulverized by his foes and at times would even fail to solve a case or, worse, find it not worth solving. Contradicting his macho image, the Spirit even cried in one episode. Similarly, Eisner's villains were not costumed super-criminals, but worn-out con men, Bowery pickpockets, street-corner punks, nickel and dime shoplifters, pimps, stoolies, and even peace-loving citizens brow-beaten into committing violent crimes. In Eisner's stories there was an awareness of human frailty that is completely absent from other comic stories.

Eisner's influence on other comic artists has been tremendous, not only through his visual style and narrative technique, but through his unique sense of humor. Eisner's sense of humor was so black and so satiric that it allowed him to burlesque almost anything. He parodied nineteen-forties

All illustrations © Will Eisner.

Spirit

BY (W)ILL EISNER

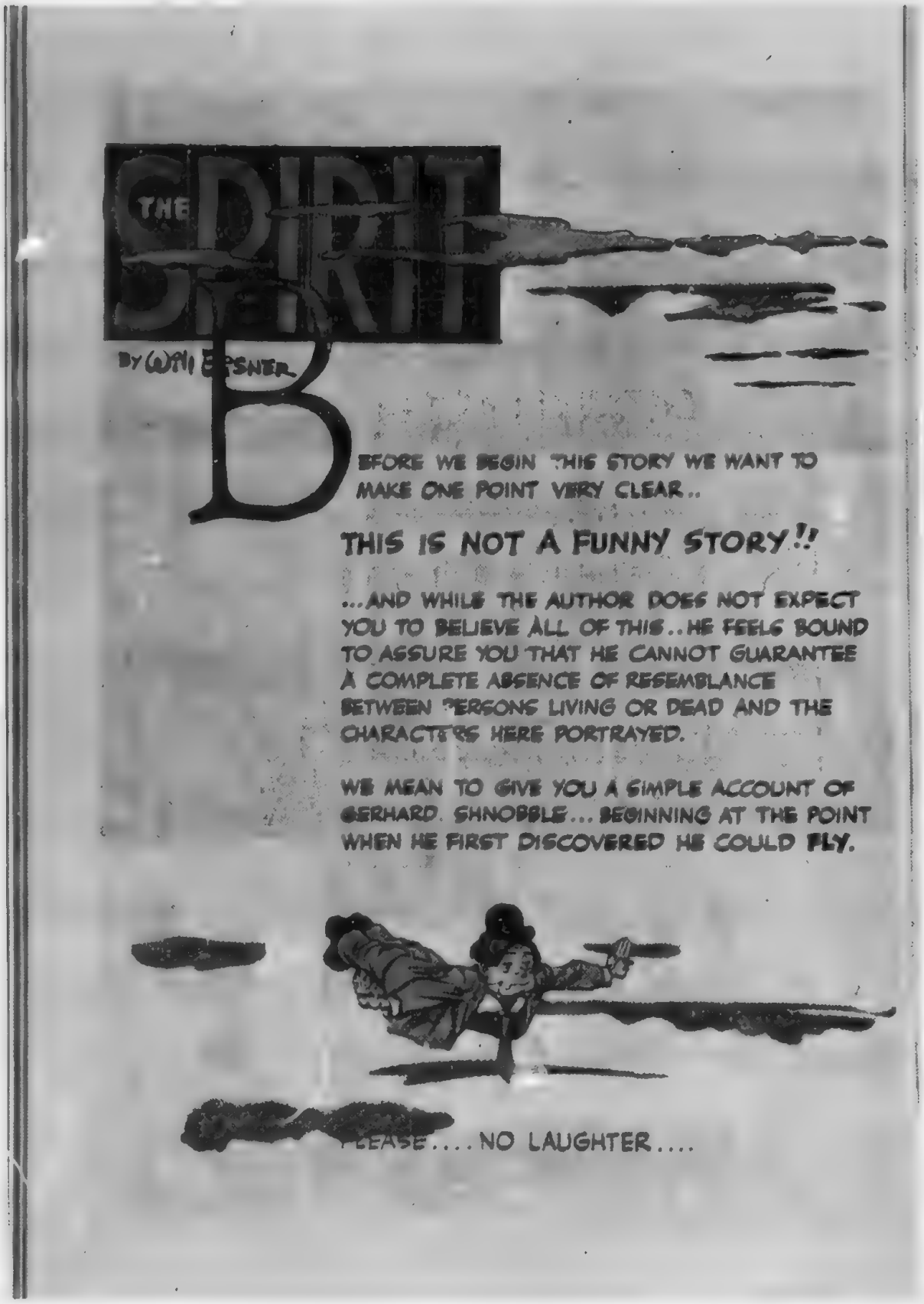
SOMETIMES THERE OCCURS IN THE HISTORY OF CRIMEFIGHTING AN INCIDENT THAT SEEMS TO BELIE THE TRUTH THAT CRIME DOES NOT PAY. OFTEN THIS IS MERELY BECAUSE THE PUNISHMENT METED OUT TO A CRIMINAL DOES NOT SEEM EQUAL TO HIS VILLAINY...

BUT LET US ASSURE YOU THAT WHAT SEEMS LIKE A LUCKY BREAK FOR A CRIMINAL IS OFTEN NOTHING BUT THE WORKING OUT OF A HIGHER JUSTICE! THIS IS BEYOND OUR MORTAL VISION... UNLESS AN OPPORTUNITY IS GIVEN TO US...

...AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE TWO LIVES... AT THE SAME TIME...

The sad affair of
CARBOY T. GRETCH
Time: Now
Place: Central City Jail

The somewhat less sad affair of
CRANFRANZ QWAYLE
Time: Now
Place: Central City Suburbs


THE SPIRIT
By Will Eisner
BEFORE WE BEGIN THIS STORY WE WANT TO MAKE ONE POINT VERY CLEAR..
THIS IS NOT A FUNNY STORY!!
...AND WHILE THE AUTHOR DOES NOT EXPECT YOU TO BELIEVE ALL OF THIS..HE FEELS BOUND TO ASSURE YOU THAT HE CANNOT GUARANTEE A COMPLETE ABSENCE OF RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN PERSONS LIVING OR DEAD AND THE CHARACTERS HERE PORTRAYED.
WE MEAN TO GIVE YOU A SIMPLE ACCOUNT OF GERHARD SHNOBBLE... BEGINNING AT THE POINT WHEN HE FIRST DISCOVERED HE COULD FLY.
PLEASE.... NO LAUGHTER....

Film Noir detective films in stories told with intricate flashbacks and treacherous *femmes fatales*; he lampooned *Lassie Come Home* in the drama "Barkarole," and made light of fairy tales like *Cinderella* or famous comic strips like *Li'l Abner, Dick Tracy,* and *Little Orphan Annie*—all drawn in the distinctive style of the original. He even disguised the front pages of *Spirit* Sunday sections to look like the covers of a true-confession magazine and *Life* magazine. It is likely that such full-blown mass-media parodies had a significant influence on the creation of *Mad* comics in 1952.

Although he discontinued *The Spirit* in 1952, Eisner's work still has an enormous influence. He now reaches new fans through reprints of his Spirit stories and as an instructor at the School for Visual Arts in New York City, where he teaches a new crop of artists the techniques he helped develop. His graphic novel, *A Contract with God*, was recently published by Baronet Publishing Company, and will be published in three foreign editions this fall.

Eisner is now at work on a new graphic novel. As in the past, he is actively engaged in developing new forms of expression through the graphic story and in exploring its full potential.

Were you interested at all in Max Reinhart and the German set designers?

Yes, the German influence was very strong on me. I was also very aware of the magazines coming out of Germany and Europe. My father was from Vienna, where he studied painting. This had an influence.

One of the biggest early influences on me was the Man Ray films. The stuff he did I see today still being called "experimental".

Among cartoonists, Milton Caniff was a hero when I was in high school. Herriman's work, *Krazy Kat*, was important to me, and the backgrounds I did later were heavily influenced by him. There was a lot of ethnic theater in New York in those

CROSS-COUNTRY DRIVING IS A TOUGH JOB..THE MONOTONY..THE UNBROKEN HUM OF THE MOTOR..ALL FORM A SORT OF HYPNOTIC INFLUENCE.....
...SOON I FOUND MYSELF THINKING THAT NOTHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN ON THIS RUN...
THEN, AS I BEGAN THE LONG CLIMB UP ROUTE 5, THE HARMONIC VIBRATION NATURAL TO MOST TRUCKS ON HEAVY PULLS BEGAN TO PULL MY HEARING...
AND SUDDENLY I BEGAN HEARING MUSIC... A STRANGE KIND OF MUSIC ...PITCHED HIGH..AND YET BLENDING WITH THE "SINGING" OF THE TRUCK..
I KEPT SLOWING DOWN THE TRUCK SO THAT I MIGHT BETTER HEAR THE MUSIC...
IT GOT LOUDER.....AND LOUDER
..AND IT SEEMED TO LIFT ME OUT OF MY TRUCK SEAT..
MY INSTINCTS WERE STILL DEPENDABLE... ...I STOPPED THE TRUCK AND BRAKED IT.. BUT MY MIND...MY BRAIN..MY NERVES WERE VIBRATING LIKE PLUCKED VIOLIN STRINGS
I MOVED THROUGH SPACE... OR WHAT SEEMED LIKE IT...THEN SUDDENLY..
WHAM

days, Jewish theater, Italian theater done in Italian, and even though I couldn't understand the language, one could sit there and watch those plays forever. New York was where it was all at—all that mix, it goes into your imagination.

You've got to understand that any artist brings to his work all the frustrations of his attempts in other media. George Bernard Shaw was a frustrated cartoonist and painter and he never made it in those media, but his work is very graphic; if you read his plays you see that he has an appreciation of stage movement and caricature.

I read a lot of Russian stuff at one point, a lot of Dostoevsky, and for a while every character I did was Raskolnikov. I could never get him out of my mind.

Sitting in your dark, soft studio where you spin out your fantasies, you bring to your work all the unrequited aspirations you have. I wanted to make comics *my* medium.

Stagecraft was probably the one element I can say I was conscious of. The comic form was, and still is, to me, as dignified as writing was for O. Henry or as film was for a director; I thought to myself, "If Man Ray can create an art form with his motion pictures and can be regarded by the intelligensia as a great artist why not comics?" Film, after all, is in its historic context an extension of sequential art—or comics as we know them.

This was done, you must understand, in the context of a time when comic artists were regarded by their own fellow artists—painters and etchers—as a very low order, as an *untermensch*, as the Germans would say. We were very low on the totem pole. People would say, "You're a cartoonist. How interesting. Have you ever considered doing serious art work?" And still, to this day, people will ask me that and it infuriates me. I *was* serious, I wrote my heart out. I remember doing a story that summed up my feelings, the story about Gerhard Shnobble, one of my favorite stories. It was about a man who could fly and was shot down—no one ever found out he could fly. Looking back on it, I suppose that's how I felt: "God, here I am writing the world's greatest novels and nobody's listening."

The Spirit *was a straddle of two media, in a way—it was a comic book but it was contained in the Sunday newspaper, so it was also a newspaper feature.*

It was a unique idea, something never tried before or since: the effort was to produce a comic book for Sunday newspapers. These papers were beginning to feel the impact of the photo magazines like *Life* and of comic books stealing some of the kids in their audience—they were desperate to find something new. I was sought out by *The Register Tribune*; they asked me if I would produce a comic book for them. As far as they were concerned, it was a comic book to answer a commercial threat—which is all the opportunity that creative people look for. "Let me answer the threat." The Sistine Chapel was painted because someone wanted the walls decorated; nobody said, "Make me an everlasting mural." They said, "Fill up the walls, they look naked." It's not a very romantic notion, but it's nonetheless a fact that great art is here all the time, artists are all over the place, and they become responsive to opportunites. Every once in a while I read a piece in one of the fanzines, a critical article where they credit me with creating comic books for newspapers—well, I didn't. The need created me, and I did it the best way I can. I was lucky. I've always sought out new markets, new areas.

The Spirit *is making something of a comeback, with the Warren and Kitchen reprintings. Why have you decided to bring them back now?*

After *The Spirit*, I spent several years in the Army discovering there was a whole new world of application for this medium, which is teaching and instruction. That became more important to me then being an entertainer. Now, I'm back doing what I call entertainment because I see a whole new opportunity, something which was brought to my attention by the emergence of the undergrounds a few years

This is Rat-Tat.
Rat-Tat is a toy machine gun.
All day long Rat-Tat would go...
RAT A TAT RAT A TAT
... and the little boys would go...
AAAAAA AAAAAA
UGH.. YOOT ME!
And even though everybody pretended he was real, Rat-Tat knew.
Deep inside, he knew. He knew he was merely an imitation.
AN ACTOR, THAT'S ALL... A CHEAP HAM ACTOR...
And Rat-Tat's greatest dream was that some day he might become a real deadly weapon, like Max the Chopper.
SALE
SALE

ago. I realized that there are a whole bunch of things undone and I want to start doing them.

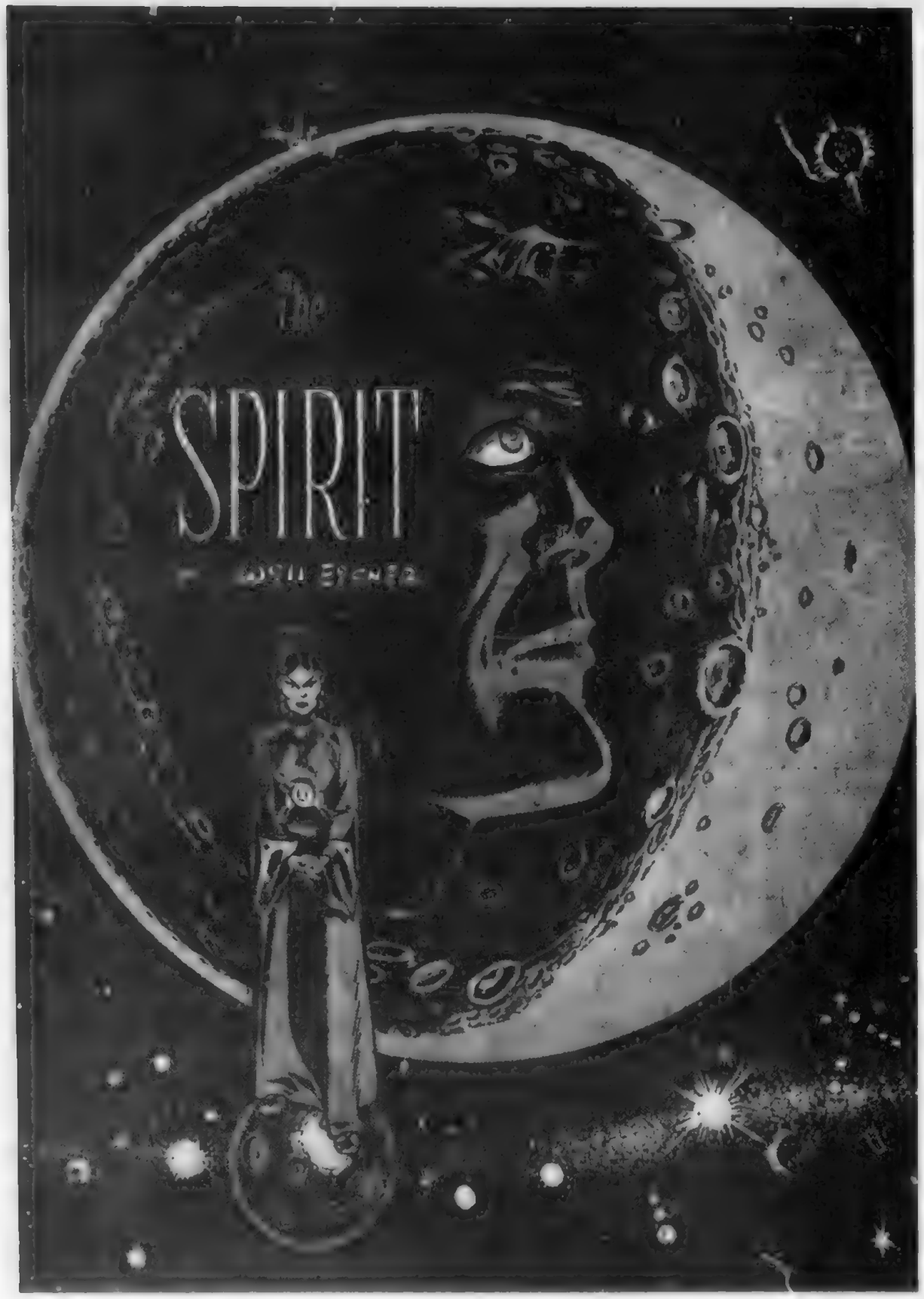
Have you always had pretty complete creative control?

Yes, I have. With *The Spirit*, the only control on me was the normal responsibility one has to newspapers, and to their editorial policies. The mask was only a concession to the newspaper syndicate that was marketing *The Spirit*. They believed the editors of the papers wouldn't feel they were getting a real comic-book product unless the strip had a costumed character. I had no intention of going that route, the whole Superman bit; I put a mask on him and called him the Spirit after six or seven names were discarded. I refused to give him superhuman powers. I did give him a car that could fly. But the mask was the only real concession, and as a matter of fact I spent the next ten years either trying to remove it or playing games with it. Gradually, it made little difference—the story was the thing.

I've always had editorial control because I was always willing to try areas where there were no preconceived patterns, so I was not threatening anyone's readership. In comic books, the big national comic distributors have preconceived editorial patterns which represent an investment. They must consider their readership. It's a matter that relates directly to their income. It is very hard for an editor to permit an artist to come in and fool around with that principle unless they are pretty damn sure it's going to result in a sale. An understanding of the business side does not hurt.

I learned a lot about business early in life, so I've always been able to conduct myself in a businesslike fashion. Business is not at all mysterious, it doesn't involve shrewd, narrow-eyed, teeth-clenching activity. It has to do with knowing what the other man needs and wants and what he is willing to or can do.

I kept control of the rights to everything I've done because it was important to me and because I was willing to pay for



that right. By "paying," I mean that I was willing to accept less money. People have given away their rights to artwork simply because the rates are that much higher—they wanted immediate money more than they wanted rights. I don't feel pity, necessarily, for the artists who lost their ownership of the comics over the years as much as I feel they made a conscious choice. Some were ripped off, there was certainly a lot of chicanery that went on in those days and creators like Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster did lose their features—but most artists knew what they were doing. They didn't even value the originals; many artists could have kept the originals all these years and they were thrown away, they were used to wrap packages. Nobody wanted the originals. The comic-book publishers kept them because they hoped to use them for reprint. The metal plates were too costly to store.

Maybe the artists had accepted the trade opinion, that the artwork was something to wrap packages with. A lot of good original art disappeared that way.

They did *marvelous* work. I lived with all of them and I want to tell you that they are great, wonderful people. There were men who were artists in every sense of the w< rd. Most of them didn't know it and nobody told them.

What happens to successful comic artists is that they become victims of their own mold; the publisher builds a cage around them. After eight or ten issues of *Superman*, an enormous success, the publisher turned to an artist and said, "We've got a good thing going. Don't you dare change!" This happens to daily-strip cartoonists who amass 100 or more papers; the more they get, the worse the inhibition gets. Suddenly so much is at stake, so many people's financial lives are dependent on it that a creator does not dare make a reversal. So although they have control, they cannot experiment with impunity.

One of your great virtues in The Spirit *was your ability to develop a credible story within a very limited space of seven pages.*

That was a very difficult thing. I learned how to do it early. A large part of my time was spent eliminating material: there are always passages that you love, which have to go because there's no room for them. Learning to write inside balloons, developing a feeling for the story's timing—those were things I picked up as I went along.

Did you ever come up with a formula for the stories?

Not really. Over the past five years I've been teaching sequential art. In the course of it I discovered that I can't develop a formula. But I have solidified usable criteria which I suppose you can call formulas. Currently, in *The Spirit* magazine, I have been writing a series of essays that ultimately could form a background for use by a working cartoonist.

One of the things I've always mistrusted about the teaching of writing and even the teaching of art is that the minute you develop a formula that you can transmit, it becomes obsolete. The only thing I've seen that works is in journalism, the five W's.

Comic books have always tried to adhere to a thematic formula, one that goes on to this day, and that is, "crime does not pay." I hope to move beyound that mold. They have never defined crime beyond anything done by an unreal person—usually awfully ugly. It's a pretty shallow notion, and I think it is sociologically untrue. As a matter of fact, I think sociology should be part of the training for anyone involved in this medium.

Then there are certain requirements, not really formulas, such as "do not disappoint the audience." If you promise them something, deliver it; if you promise them that the hero is going to win, then he should. But even that rule I violated several times. The Spirit got beaten up terribly, and he would lose as often as he would win.

How did you go about developing a story?

Nine times out of ten I would create a doorknob and build a house around it. For the years that Jules Feiffer worked in my shop, I would talk my stories out with him—he was an awfully good sounding board and he had a marvelous ear for dialogue. I would come into the office Monday morning with a first page or an ending or a basic idea.

Once I did a story as a result of a challenge. We got into a discussion in the studio about the relationship between words and pictures. So I did a story with no words at all.

I watched the newspapers. Newspaper stories provide human problems around which human dramas can be created.

You often started stories with a newspaper mock-up.

Yes, I would use the newspaper motif for realism—again, groping and experimenting. Remember, I was lucky to have an audience whose response could not be measured the way comic books are, by newsstand response, or the way television is. I did not have to worry about ratings. If you're working in a climate in which the sales drop off suddenly when you run a story that doesn't have a villain, or whatever, it would take a very strong man to go back the next week and do another story without a villain.

In my case, I had to turn out a story every week. I knew my audience would still be there because the newspaper was there. I also knew that I had a lot of tolerance; if they didn't like the story one week, they would still be back the next week. I had the chance to do a "bomb" every once in a while. My own integrity prevented me from doing anything casually—I still, to this day, can't sign an autograph casually. I don't think any of the cartoonists I know can do that either.

With *The Spirit*, I had a unique situation. I was pulling stories from all directions—I was free to do a comedy story one week and a serious one the next. It was also a difficult situation, in a way: I had to satisfy all the members of the family, adults and children. I also had to produce a seven-page story every week. I didn't realize it then, but I was doing a television show every week.

The Spirit was very different from doing a big 16-page comic book, it was for a different purpose. A totally different medium. *The Spirit* was never successful as a comic book on the newsstand; it's successful now as a Warren and Kitchen magazine because it's printed for an audience that is designed for it. It's in a different format, it's in black and white—I think I like it better in black and white than in color, even though I spent a lot of time experimenting with color.

One thing remarkable about The Spirit *was that you showed corruption in high places, that it wasn't just the criminal, that crime was imbedded in the city.*

I think others did, too. But I don't think they could get into the subtle kind of story I could; remember that the comic book was structured around and the editorial thrust designed for an eight-to-twelve-year-old reading level—at least that's what they thought they were doing.

On the other side of me were people like Milton Caniff, who was doing very sophisticated plots and very, very sophisticated stories.

About dealing with crime in high places, I was a city kid and I knew all about corrupt politicians; I knew about gangsters, I knew about the Mafia—it was called Black Hand in those days. I was there during the Hearst circulation wars, I saw circulation men get beat up. If you didn't see them, you heard about them, you saw a lot of life between the walls of the tenements.

This interview was recorded at the San Diego Comics Convention in August 1975. Donald Ault also participated in the interview, which Eisner updated in 1979.

Bambi and the Goof

A Former Disney Director Remembers Them Well

From the opening scenes of Bambi.

By JACK KINNEY

Jack Kinney was an animation director at the Walt Disney studio for almost 20 years; he is best known for the long series of Goofy cartoons built around a "How to..." theme, but he also directed parts of these feature cartoons: Pinocchio, Dumbo, Saludos Amigos, Victory Through Air Power, The Three Caballeros, Fun and Fancy Free, Melody Time, and The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad.

In recent years, Kinney has been committing his memories of his long Disney career to paper; this article is a portion of those memoirs. The story begins when Kinney has finished working on Bone Trouble *(1940), the first cartoon that he directed for Disney.*

After finishing *Bone Trouble*, I was assigned to story and direction on *Bambi*. There was now a big push to finally get it out. I was briefed by Perce Pearce, the producer, who was often referred to by several unbelievers as the biggest flim-flammer to rise from the ranks. Perce had started as a lowly in-betweener but by dint of research (stealing gags), a jolly ho-ho laugh, twinkling blue eyes, an unflappable ego, a manner of speaking up in open story meetings, and other ploys he had managed to get himself transferred to the Story Department.

His big chance came when Merrill de Maris, a very competent writer, was faced with an impossible situation. He had been told he would have a special story meeting with Walt on his *Snow White* sequence. Merrill was prepared. His story and boards were in fine showable shape, but Merrill was a very tense guy with a terrible inferiority complex. Merrill stewed for three days about having to present his boards to Walt for approval. All the guys in the Story Department had assured Merrill that he would have no problems whatsoever, since his material was excellent.

The assurances helped Merrill not one whit. Time was running out. Then, a last minute reprieve. Perce Pearce unselfishly offered to tell the story for Merrill. Merrill's relief knew no bounds.

All of the directors, Dave Hand, the story guys, and Walt assembled in the big sweat box for the evening meeting. (Note: all story meetings were scheduled for seven o'clock to save production time. However, all of the invited people were compensated by a 45-cent chit entitling them to a free dinner at Charlie's Restaurant across the street from the studio. Charlie's place was a greasy spoon but the food was filling.)

Merrill sat in the back row. Perce stepped forward with a jolly ho-ho and a twinkle in his blue eyes and gave a performance never before seen in a Disney story meeting. Every stop was pulled, every dramatic gesture used, each line of dialogue delivered with the proper reading and subtle nuances—a tremendous act! Naturally the sequence was accepted. Walt was enthralled and Perce was installed.

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Pinto Colvig (left), the voice of Goofy, with Jack Kinney in front of a storyboard for African Diary *(1945). Although Colvig was working for the Fleischer studio in Florida when Kinney began directing Goofy cartoons, Colvig later did the voice for many cartoons.*

Now I was in the presence of this phenom. We were alone. The curtains were drawn so the room was in semi-darkness. Perce told me the story of *Bambi* as it had never been told before. I was as enthralled by this beautiful ham as Walt had been when Perce gave his *Snow White* performance.

I started the following day. Berk Anthony and I were ensconced in a large room on the third floor. Our assignment was the opening sequences. We started as we usually did by throwing rough sketches up on the storyboards as we felt our way into the continuity.

After a couple of weeks in which we had been visited several times by other members of the unit, Dave Hand dropped in and said what we were doing was fine for some things but in the *Bambi* unit each story sketch had to be made as a finished piece of art. But, he admonished, "don't let that stop you, just keep on going as you are and we'll have some of our story sketch guys follow you up. I gotta get this picture moving into production. Walt wants it ready by Christmas."

Soon after, guys like Marc Davis, Clair Weeks, and Tom Codrick began coming in and snatching our rough sketches off the wall. They returned beautifully rendered sketches as they replaced the roughs. These finished frawings were each matted in black, with the number of each sketch pasted on the lower right-hand corner of the black matte. The scene description and/or dialogue was typewritten and fastened to the matte just below the drawing. Not only that, but each drawing was firmly fastened to the storyboard by four push pins, one attached to each corner. This was all right with us, as it made our efforts look good, real good. But the expense! I was told not to worry about that, as *Bambi* was strictly first cabin.

Several weeks went by, and the story and storyboards were taking shape—and what a shape! Every drawing was worthy of framing and hanging in your house, or in an art gallery. for that matter.

I informed Dave's production office that we would like a meeting with Walt soon, but was told that first we must have a review with Dave Hand, Perce Pearce, and Larry Morey. "Okay, how about sometime next week?" I said. The secretary said, "I'll see what I can do. They have a very tight schedule."

Finally the boards were ready, and we waited and waited. Eventually, an evening meeting was arranged. Starting at seven o'clock, I got to tell the story. There were six boards filled with drawings—all numbered, of course—for the opening sequence of the picture. I had gotten past the opening pan and as far as drawing No. 8 on the first board when I was interrupted by a jolly ho-ho from Perce Pearce.

Perce stood up, a commanding figure, very carefully buttoned his double-breasted coat, puffed on his pipe, started toward the storyboard; then retreated toward a box of matches. He again strolled toward the storyboard, pointing toward drawing No. 1 with the stem of his pipe. He cleared his throat as all eyes focused on his pipe stem. He paused dramatically and reached for the match box in his other hand.

Jack Kinney and members of his unit in front of storyboards for "Bongo"; Kinney directed that section of Fun and Fancy Free *(1947). From left: Don DaGradi (layout), John Lagan (story), Jane Sinclair (secretary and assistant director), Jack Kinney, John Nienaorff (layout), Dick Kinney (story, and brother of Jack Kinney), Lance Nolley (layout), Art Riley (backgrounds), and Ted Sebern (assistant director and film editor).*

He inserted the stem of his pipe into his mouth, scratched the lucifer on the side of the box, started the match toward his pipe, then raised the burning match in the direction of the storyboard and drawing number one.

"Migawd," I thought, "he's going to set fire to it!" Luckily the match burnt out before it reached the board. Naturally, Perce had to return the burnt match to an inconvenient ash tray, shaking it to make sure it was extinguished. He again approached the storyboard, but as he arrived in position his double-breasted coat was again unbuttoned! Slowly and methodically Perce rebuttoned the garment.

Now with a jolly ho-ho and a few ahems he was ready. "I've been thinking"...pause...pointing to drawing No. 1, then carefully walking from drawing No. 1 to drawing No. 8...stopping in front of drawing No. 8, he gave it extremely close scrutiny, then retraced his steps to drawing No. 1. A long pause, then, "I've been thinking"...pause..."whether"...steps between drawing No. 1 and drawing No. 8, his head slowly scanning the assembled drawings. Now he turns to his audience...pause (dramatic)..."I've been thinking" (and then with a rush, comparatively speaking)..."whether drawing No. 1 would be better in drawing No. 4's spot and then drawing No. 3 in place of No. 2, thus moving No. 7 in the No. 1 spot followed by No. 7 here...No. 8, there and No. 6...no, that won't work."

At this point, several other persons spoke up, each with a different combination of positions for drawings No. 1 through No. 8.

You would be surprised how many combinations can be made from only eight drawings.

The argument continued until 10 p.m. At that point, the unit manager, who had not entered into the discussion (neither had I), announced: "Hey, fellas, it's ten o'clock."

Suddenly the discussion stopped. "Why, so it is," said an astonished Perce. "Let's leave it this way and have a further discussion." Then with a jolly ho-ho and a twinkle in his eye, he announced, "Tomorrow's a working day!" A few more jolly ho-hos and the meeting dispersed.

Two weeks later, there was a second story meeting. This time I hoped to tell the entire sequence, past drawing No. 8.

The sequence began by taking the audience into the deep forest and introducing all of nature's cute creatures—most of

them recently born to proud parents—and of course ending with the newborn Bambi and his mother. The dialogue was "Bambi...Bambi...my little Bambi." That's all. There were many storyboards, with hundreds of story sketches, following this introduction of our hero, but we never got to the rest of the boards to find out if the continuity was working. The meeting stopped for a profound discussion of how the immortal line should be delivered. There were many conflicting ideas on the timing and inflections of this seemingly simple statement. Perce advocated that it should be delivered this way: "Bam...beeee...(long pause)....Bammmm...beee...my...litt...tullll...Baaammmm... ...beeeeeeeeeee..." He held center stage in front of drawing No. 16, which depicted the "mother and child" cushioned on a soft bower of leaves and branches, with the gentle sunlight filtering through the boughs of the trees, spotlighting the scene—somewhat like a depiction of the Nativity. On finishing his emotional rendition, Perce blew his nose and gently dabbed at his eyes as he returned to his seat, buttoning his double-breasted coat. Not a sound was made by the group until Perce was comfortably seated. Then Larry Morey (a fine lyricist) spoke: "Percie...I would like to make a suggestion..." Perce graciously nodded his agreement with a benevolent smile while lighting his pipe with an ordinary kitchen match (which always burnt out before it made contact with the pipe bowl). Larry's rendition went something like this: "Bam-bi—Bambi—my—lit-tle—Bam-beeeeee." After Larry's reading, Perce took center stage again and pointing his pipe stem and gently tapping the drawing in question, he again presented his dramatic reading. But Larry was not about to give up: "Yes, Percie, I see your point, but at this particular time in the sequence a most important over-all facet must be faced. No. 1, this is the first line spoken in the picture. No. 2, this line of dialogue establishes the fact in the picture the animals will *talk*. No. 3, thematically I want to sneak in an oboe obligatto with a flute overtone to augment the dialogue and mood." Then Larry again did his reading. For the next hour the polite argument continued until the hour of 10 p.m. arrived, and the two contestants reluctantly agreed that they would sleep on it.

The next working day I called Ben Sharpsteen and asked to see him. On entering Ben's office I burst out: "Ben, for Chrissake get me off that goddamn *Bambi*—onto shorts—anything." And that's how I got back to normal again—onto shorts.

My decision to bail out of the *Bambi* fiasco came at a very good time, because a big management decision had been made simultaneously: to set up individual production units on each character in the Disney menagerie. Using a number of the characters in one film tied up a lot of valuable talent and only one film resulted. But if each group of creative people, all with expertise in handling a particular character, worked only on films starring only one character, better productions might result, at less cost.

The new units were set up. Jack King handled the Ducks, Norm Ferguson and Nick Nichols the Plutos, and Bill Roberts and Riley Thompson the Mickeys. The Goofy series, luckily, came to me. From the studio talent pool I drew a Class A team to work with me: Ralph Wright, a keen story and gag man with a peculiar sense of humor that fitted right in with the Goof's odd-ball antics; Jim Carmichael, who would handle story sketch along with Ralph and follow through into production layout; Lou Debney, who was my assistant director; Woolie Reitherman and John Sibley, who were my lead animators. All told, we made up a competitive, on-the-bit and highly creative team that was perfect for turning out shorts of the kind I had planned for the Goofy series.

However, there was one member of the group who contributed an invaluable bit to the development of this series that no one—believe you me, no one—could have, except himself. I mean John McLeish.

In the natural course of production events I had been doing voice casting for a different type of narrator to do the voice-over dialogue. Voice-over because, as we saw it, the Goof wouldn't talk much, if at all. The reason for this was that Pinto Colvig, the old circus hand who had done Goofy's patter for years, had left the studio. Consequently, all the Goof's manic mutterings had to be lifted from the studio library of soundtracks. Voice-over was to be our crutch—but a special kind of crutch! We needed a voice that would be completely at variance with what was happening on the screen, the screwy situations that only Goofy could get into. We wanted someone who could project a heavy, omniscient quality; someone who talked it straight and pontifical, no matter what our gonged-out hero was doing. I put a lot of Hollywood voice boxes over the jumps—radio and stage and film speechifiers by the dozens—but none of them came over with exactly what I was looking for. It was then that I discovered John McLeish.

McLeish had been scooped up in Disney's world-wide search for talent, and John had plenty of that. He was a top-

From How to Ride a Horse *(1941)*

From How to Play Golf *(1944).*

flight artist, an excellent draftsman with a highly developed sense of color. He had been run through the studio production grinder, ending up as a story sketch man on feature films. One of John's outstanding attributes was his devotion to the legitimate theater and drama in all its forms. He had a fixation on John Barrymore, to whom he bore a certain resemblance. He added to that resemblance by wearing longish hair in the Barrymore pompadour, a romantic mustache, and shirts with long collar points, the kind known as "Barrymore." His face was long, with a finely-chiseled nose, adding to the superficial resemblance. John generally conducted himself as his own inimitable version of the great profile. Most acquaintances claimed he was even better than the original.

But McLeish's outstanding characteristic was his voice, to which he gave full play at the drop of a buskin. Cultivated, deep, and resonant, John's dextrous set of pipes was often displayed for the benefit of his awed fellow workers during long sessions at the drawing boards, when he would utter imposing passages from the Immortal Bard, all delivered in the most fulsome Barrymore fashion, every syllable, word and phrase rolling forth in sonorous or thunderous tones that shook his listeners and the windows. Needless to say, such dramatic vocal ability did not long go hidden under a bushel in the Disney studio of that period; the trolls, elves, and pixies were encouraged to don different bonnets. (Interchangeability of abilities kept production costs down.)

Somehow, through a leaky spout in the studio pipeline, word trickled to me about this fantastic pencil-pusher who could do a Barrymore put-on better than Barrymore. Maybe this bird was the very one I'd had my net out for. So I had John over to the sound stage for a session. History was made that day.

What I didn't tell John before the recording began was our idea of doing a straight voice to contrast with the wacky visuals. Knowing of John's tendency to ham it up on occasion, I was afraid he'd overdo it and lose the cutting edge of our idea. Instead I told John to give it a straight reading, all seriousness, just as though he were narrating an educational or documentary film. John nodded in frowning agreement. Serious, man!

McLeish got the idea. He frowned deeper, adjusted the Windsor knot in his tie, checked his script, inhaled deeply and took off right on cue. Ah, there was a performance that even the Great Profile would have been proud of. There wasn't a dry eye on that sound stage when John rumbled to his finale. We had our voice, indeed! John bowed to our plaudits with becoming modesty. He thought of his narration as pure drama and I didn't tell him differently. To do so would have crushed him. But after a few pictures had been made in this

From The Art of Self Defense *(1941).*

style, John found out and felt that he had been duped. He felt that he had wasted his talents on what he referred to as "that anthropomorphic nonentity," Goofy. In later sessions, John tried to be funny, which would've killed the basic premise of contrast, and we had to work hard to keep his delivery straight and pompous.

Some time previous to this I had submitted to Walt my ideas and suggestions as to how this Goofy series should be handled. It would fall within the studio's rules on limiting the number of characters in a film in order to keep costs down; we'd use only Goofy in each episode. The "How to..." format opened up a vast area. The subject matter could be anything: how to fix it, do-it-yourself repairs, or even the wide world of sports, all open to Goofy's dum-dum exploration and involvement. What he would do in any given story would be the hook we'd hang it on. I got a call from Walt: "Jack, this is one helluvan idea! Go ahead on it!"

Encouraged by Walt's favorable reaction (this didn't happen every time), I asked, "Which one first?" "Any one of 'em. Which do you like?" Knowing of Walt's keen interest in polo at that time, I said, "How's about 'How to Ride a Horse'?" "Great! GO on that one!" And that's how the Goof's "How to..." series got started, a series that ran to about two dozen episodes before Goofy went into his last caroming, crashing pratfall.

The formula we'd developed, the contrast of voice and action, was a good one, and in *How to Ride a Horse* we played it full out. Goofy, dressed in typically (for him) ill-fitting English riding clothes, rides to hounds as McLeish's supercilious voice gives instructions. As John's rotund instructions and descriptions rolled over him, Goofy blissfully demonstrated some of the most ridiculous horsemanship seen since man first bestrode a shaggy prehistoric nag. And, for the first time in a cartoon, we used a device that worked wonders in later cartoons: the slow-motion demonstration of how to do whatever the Goof was maddeningly lousing up.

This basic idea and its masterful execution by the animators made this series a winner right from the start. *How to Ride a Horse* was so well received by the distributor, RKO, that it was included in the feature film, *The Reluctant Dragon*, instead of being released as a short subject.

That "horse opera" having done so well, we continued with a number of other "How to..." films, including *How to Play Football, The Art of Self-defense,* and *The Olympic Champ.* The interplay between John McLeish's narration and Goofy's antics was a delight to audiences for the run of the series. We were just as delighted in the making of them.

LONDON: .June Foray with John Halas, international president of ASIFA, the world-wide animation organization.

Destination: Animation

Notes from London, Moscow, and Tokyo

By JUNE FORAY
and STEPHEN BOSUSTOW

London: It was the warmest winter that London had experienced in donkey's years when we lunched with Kathleen "Spud" Houston and Jim Duffy at the restaurant in Soho. On our way to the People's Republic of China, we had decided to see our producer/animator/director friends in their own countries and at their own light boxes, rather than seeing them only in the frenetic atmosphere of international animation festivals. *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* was being made as a TV special by the Bill Melendez Studio in Hollywood and London, and Spud and Jim, as animators, were working on it through TVC, the animation studio owned by George Dunning, who regrettably died during the production.

Bob Godfrey, the mad genius of the drawing board, met with us for another lunch, and we discussed his latest film *Dream Doll*, a co-production between him and Zagreb (Yugoslavia) Films—which he had hoped would be completed by Academy Awards time. Alas, it wasn't.

Jim Duffy is animating mostly commercials at TVC, and Spud, besides working on her own film, *How the Kiwi Lost*

LONDON: Jim Duffy, "Spud" Houston, June Foray, and Stephen Bosustow.

His Wings, an 11½-minute story based on a Maori legend, is working with Godfrey on several commercials in Paris. TVC was at the time of our visit preparing another Gerald Scarfe film for Pink Floyd. And Martin Rosen, producer of *Watership Down*, was recruiting layout artists for his new production, *Plague Dogs*.

Moscow: We had cabled from Los Angeles to Boris Stepantsev and Feodor Khytruk to expect our arrival on a certain date. On calling the Film Makers Association, we became apprehensive about ever finding anyone who could speak English. At last, we did, and we were informed that we could not visit the Association unless we cleared it through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Another frustrating obstacle.

"We'll call you later about visiting the studio," the Department of Foreign Affairs told us. "It will be sometime in the afternoon."

A precious day down the Volga. By late afternoon, when we finally got in touch with Galina Levatina at the Film Makers Association, we found that the Association had received our wires and had reserved the entire theater on that day to screen for us all the animated films that had been made in the last few months. Feodor Khytruk was attending an animation festival and was not in the city. Undaunted, Galina planned our itinerary for the next day.

We visited for hours with Ivanov-Vano, the veteran animator/director/producer. The intimidating language barrier was transcended by Galina's perfect English, and effusive welcomes were accompanied by the omnipresent vodka, apples, and cheese. Ivanov gave Stephen a copy of his first book and told him that his next one would contain two chapters on Stephen and UPA. Navigating 100 proof, we visited every department of the studio and met with writers, cameramen, animators, inkers, and painters. We also met Byarsky, a delightful maker of puppet films *a la* Jiri Trnka. Almost octogenarians, Ivanov-Vano and Byarsky possess the enthusiasm of young animators just embarking on their careers in this exhilarating art form; they are both looking to the future and are producing new films.

© *1979 June Foray and Stephen Bosustow*

June Foray, best known for her multitude of cartoon voices, was for six years the president of the Hollywood branch of ASIFA. Stephen Bosustow, one of the founders of the UPA Studio and its principal owner for many years, and more recently a producer of educational films, is June Foray's successor as president of ASIFA Hollywood.

MOSCOW: Stephen Bosustow with Ivanov-Vano.

LONDON: Bob Godfrey and June Foray.

MOSCOW: Nicolai "Kolya" Serebryakov and June Foray.

The Bolshoi Theater served as a respite from animation in the evening, but the next frigid day found us at the foreign section of the Film Makers Association, meeting with chairwoman Nadezhda J. Volchenko. How could we be the exemplary guests and not partake again of vodka, tea, cheese, and apples? We couldn't; so we did. We promised Madame Volchenko that we would establish an American-Russian cultural exchange of animation filmmakers.

We spent hours viewing films of our animation associates. We were joined by Boris Stepantsev, Irina Garanina, and Nicolai Serebryakov (Kolya, we called him).

Boris Stepantsev had arrived at our private screening tardy and somber, having just attended the funeral of a friend, but since he had taken this much time out of work on his new film, an adaptation of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, he decided to spend the rest of our last day in Moscow with us. Kolya was of the same mind.

What plans did we have for dinner? No particular ones. "You are with us!" exclaimed Kolya. The affluent Film Makers Association not only owns its own building but maintains a restaurant on the top floor. Upstairs, Kolya snapped his fingers and magically there appeared two bottles of you-know-what. We respectfully declined the firewater, but Kolya respectfully insisted. Bottoms up again and again and again. We consulted our watches at 9 p.m. and told our hosts that we must return to the hotel, pay our respective bills, and leave for the airport. The five hours of Intourist car that we had paid for had long since ended. What to do? Kolya had his car and would hear no objections. We would visit his home, meet his artist wife and talented 12-year-old son, after which his wife would take us to the hotel, where Intourist

TOKYO: Shinichi Suzuki, Stephen Bosustow, June Foray, and Kihachiro Kawamoto.

would be waiting to deliver us to Aeroflot.

Nicolai Serebryakov's domain was a wondrous place with its clutter of ink pots, brushes, canvases, animation paper, work sheets, cels, murals and *objets d'art* nailed, placed, and taped to every corner of the floor, tables, and walls. Certainly, there could be no disputation that this flat was where his personal and professional lives were so ardently lived. June became the recipient of two magnificent drawings, one by Kolya and one by his son.

Tokyo: We arrived in Tokyo from Katmandu 24 hours behind schedule and spreading cold germs with not-so-gay abandon. Stephen spent his first day having a chiropractor resetting his vertebrae, which he had disassembled climbing the pyramids during a stop in Egypt. June's foot was as huge as a horse's hoof after having been turned in the Delhi airport, where we slept on the floor for eight hours waiting out a Pan Am strike.

Ed Herscovitz, the producer of *Petzi*, an international animated television series, had been calling the Imperial Hotel to talk about entertaining us and putting us in touch with Japanese artists. We excused ourselves after the Sanrio company tour in order to meet with Ed, Shinichi Suzuki, and Kihachiro Kawamoto. Yoji Kuri couldn't make it and Osamu Tezuka was in the United States.

Although Shinichi Suzuki cannot speak English, communication has always managed to remain on a high plateau. Friendship does surmount the language barrier. He founded Studio Zero in 1963 with his confreres Fujiko, Akatsuka, Ishimori, and Tsunoda. After unhappy experiences with mass production for television, Studio Zero reorganized in 1970, and Suzuki has himself directed *The Point*, *Hyotan*, and *Hagoromo*.

Over a $7-per-sandwich lunch we swapped info on people and their productions and learned more about our Japanese acquaintances. Kihachiro Kawamoto has spent most of his life as a puppet maker and puppet filmmaker, beginning with the Toho Motion Picture Company in 1946. In 1963, he studied with Jiri Trnka in Czechoslovakia.

Shinichi Suzuki observed later, "You were so busy and getting illness that we could not talk with each other so much." We did run out of steam in about three hours. When the bill amounting almost to our national debt arrived with the discreet waiter, we all fought for it; however, through our lack of energy and the generosity of Ed, Shinichi, and Kihachiro, we lost.

The next day, Ed purchased a girdle for Stephen's bad back and vitamin C for June's cold.

During the course of a conversation, Ed asked us to recommend a designer/animator/writer who could make a one-minute film on the universal subject of peace. June immediately named Bernie Gruver. Ed called from Tokyo to Bernie at the Melendez Studio. Fait accompli.

Bernie's *War Dogs* was included in a television series on the nuclear age for NHK, Japan's government-supported television. It was telecast in prime time when the usual ratings were 7 per cent. With the nuclear age series, the rating increased to 11 per cent, which translated into over 10 million viewers.

The next morning, our plane flew gracefully away from the highly industrialized country of Japan, toward Peking and the emerging People's Republic of China.

Thumbnail Sketches

Because of an illness in his family, Dick Huemer could not write a column for this issue of Funnyworld. *This installment of "Huemeresque" is composed of excerpts from the interviews with Huemer that Joe Adamson recorded in 1968 and 1969 as part of the American Film Institute/ University of California at Los Angeles Oral History Program. Excerpts from those interviews have already been published in* Funnyworld *No. 16 and No. 17. In the following excerpts, Huemer describes some of his co-workers at the Disney studio where Huemer was an animator, director, and story director for many years. These excerpts, like those previously published, have been edited by Huemer.*

I want to give you a few thumbnail impressions of some of the fellows at Disney's. It's not going to be easy to make this interesting because after all, what can you say about guys who come in, sit down, and do an eight-hour stint at their desks or drawing boards? You see, animation requires a lot of strict application, nose to the grindstone, turn it out. I don't think bricklayers work any steadier than animators. It may be art to some, but to animators it's just plain hard work.

Norm Ferguson

Norm Ferguson started as a bookkeeper at Paul Terry's *Aesop's Fables*. Then I suppose one day he thought he'd like to animate, tried it, and evidently didn't get much encouragement because he left Terry's and accepted an offer from Disney. Walt was really hard pressed for men in those days, and he was trying almost anybody that showed talent. Fergy hadn't animated much before, but he fell right into it. He was one of the naturals, like Freddy Moore or Ward Kimball. It just naturally flowed out of their pencils or heads or wherever talent flows from. In every studio there was, and still is, the so-called Best Animator. When I came to work at Disney's in 1933, Norm, or Fergy as we called him, was IT. Not only the best at Disney's but consequently the best in the world.

Walt was just crazy about Fergy's animation and with darn good reason. Fergy's characters lived and breathed and seemed to have actual thought processes. His sequence with Pluto and the flypaper, for instance, was a real classic. It still holds up as well as ever today. I saw it just last week in connection with a show we're doing for TV this Christmas, and we all laughed as much as ever. Fergy did the roughest pencilling of anybody I ever saw or heard of. The inkers used to be almost in despair, picking the right lines to follow out of this mish-mash, but they loved it, they loved to work on his stuff because they knew how great it was.

Fergy wasn't just a Pluto and Peg-leg Pete animator either. He did all the wicked-witch animation in *Snow White*. He used to say that he would never leave the Disney studios, and when he got too old and feeble to animate anymore, he'd be perfectly content as a studio cop. It's sad to tell you that his wish wasn't granted. Like so many animators, eventually he became a director, and then one day he was gone. He found a job with several smaller studios; he might even have gone into business for himself. About five years afterwards he died very suddenly. I remember seeing him in a bar, Alphonse's in Toluca Lake, where a lot of us animators used to go after work, and he seemed perfectly all right. The next week I heard that he'd died. Fergy had been suffering from diabetes for about 25 years.

Fergy was one sweet little guy, that's how everyone felt about him, and in his own way, he was also one of Walt's demi-geniuses. Once at a meeting right in front of everybody Walt said to Fergy, "Fergy, you're a great actor," and Fergy sort of simpered and said, "Well, I don't know." And Walt said, "Yes, you are. That's why your animation is so good, because you feel. You feel what these characters feel."

Earl Hurd

Back in 1914 or 1915 Earl Hurd had a comic strip in the *New York Mail*, a newspaper long since defunct. It was called *Editor Mouse*; mice were already used in cartoons then. It was mostly based on puns, some of which I thought were really quite clever. Earl had another comic strip in the middle twenties called *Suzie Sunshine*. It was a continuity strip with a little girl character, and for the first time ever as far as I know, one of the characters died. This was a very unusual and shocking thing to have in a comic strip in the twenties, and it got a lot of publicity. The strip died too, eventually, which was nothing new. The mortality rate is very high in comic strips, as I know only too well.

© Walt Disney Productions

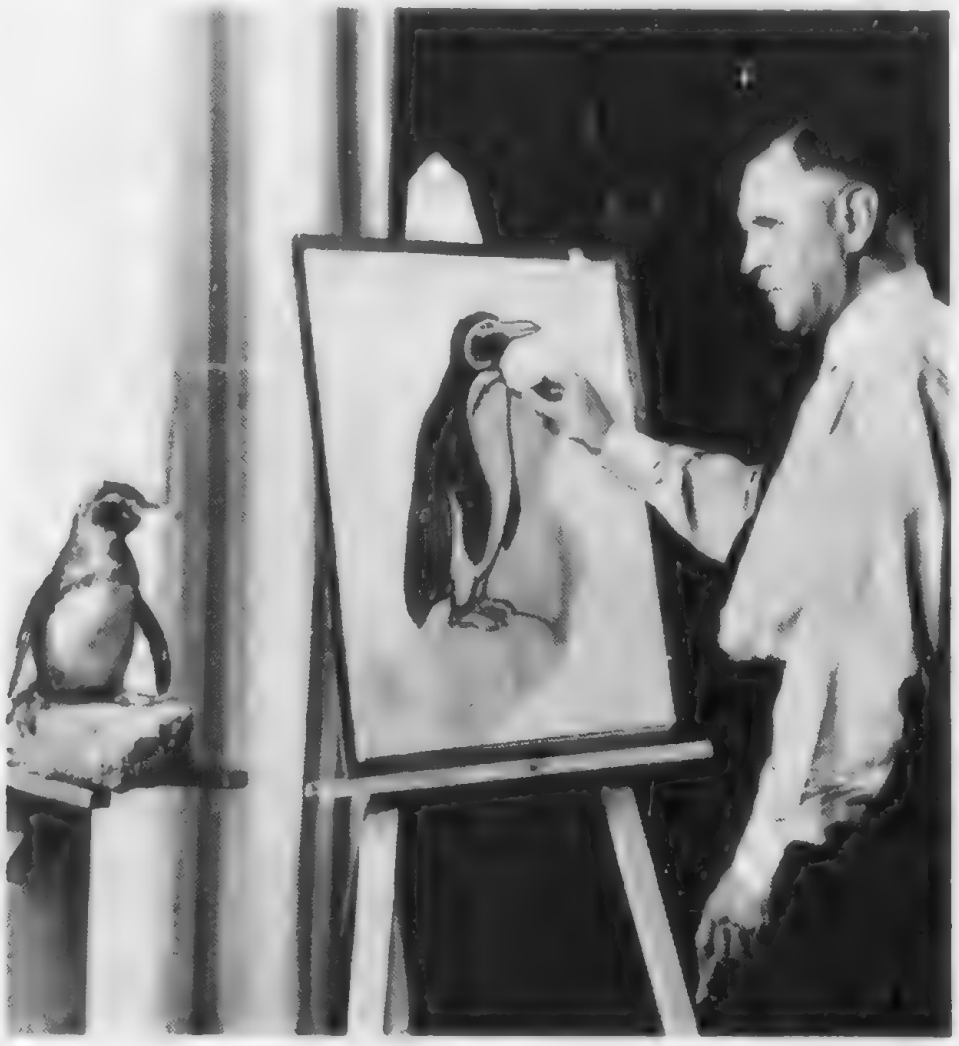
Norm Ferguson (seated) and Nick George check a scene on a movieola in 1933.

Earl was a very inventive guy. He invented the cel system for animated cartoons. He also invented a graduated ratchet system for the movement of pan backgrounds under the camera. Before that it used to be done by hand by making little pencil gradations on the bottom of the sliding panorama background. But he rigged it up so that it could be done with a crank. In his later years he mechanized his chicken yard in Burbank, gates opened and everything operated by electricity. It was a very astonishing thing. He was a pretty old guy then and hadn't aged well. He was kind of shaky; smoked too much, I suppose. For some reason I never figured out, he kept a live chicken back in his studio in New York in the twenties. I don't know, maybe he couldn't eliminate the farm boy from his nature.

There's a memorial plaque to Earl Hurd in the lobby of the theater on the Disney lot. It's the only one of its kind; nobody else who ever died has rated one. He died quietly of a heart attack in his workshop tinkering to the very end. And also to the very end his sketches were very highly thought of at Disney's. He still had a very keen mind and it took a

Earl Hurd (second from right) at the Paramount cartoon studio in New York City in 1921. Frank Moser is at the left, Harry Bailey (who, like Hurd, later worked for Disney) is at the right. The last name of the other man is Leonard; his full name is not known.

premature death to remove him from active participation in the thirties. Earl Hurd was one of the real pioneers. The whole idea of using cels was his, instead of doing it the way McCay did with everything on paper and laboriously traced.



© Walt Disney Productions

Albert Hurter sketches in a publicity photo for Peculiar Penguins, *a 1934 Silly Symphony.*

Albert Hurter

Albert Hurter goes back to 1918, somewhere in there. There is only one of his drawings in existence in any other medium besides pencil. I have the only one that's an inked drawing, of some pigs. An early sort of model sheet. But he was superb with pencil renditions. Albert was a Swiss. Never got married and when he died he left a stamp collection that was worth a fortune. He lived in a dump on Main Street in L.A. and besides his rare European stamps he apparently had no outside interests. The way Walt used him was to turn him loose on a project, give him his head over a situation or story and see what he could come up with. Albert would sit by himself all day and fill sheet after sheet with drawings, all highly imaginative and often startlingly grotesque. He was on most of the early Silly Symphonies. The wonderful details and carvings in *Snow White* and *Pinocchio*, the furniture, candlesticks, costumes, were all his, created or inspired by him. His sort of medieval, Germanic, fairy-tale approach was just what the pictures needed. In *Fantasia*, the demon on top of Bald Mountain was his rendition. A simple pencil sketch suggested the whole thing. He showed a demon up there unfolding his wings and we picked up the story from there. That's how he operated. He would give wonderful inspirational suggestions. He left instructions in his will to publish a book of his collected pencil drawings, and this was done under the title *He Drew as He Pleased*. It has a very fine foreword by Ted Sears, who as you know was one of us old timers; we sat at the same animation bench up in Fordham, at the *Mutt and Jeff* studio. When Hurter dropped out of *Mutt and Jeff*, he was in advertising for many years. Actually nobody else in animation could use him; his animation was

© Walt Disney Productions

Ham Luske (left) and Walt Disney look at one of the plaster models made for the benefit of the animators working on Pinocchio.

all right for *Mutt and Jeff*, but it wouldn't have done for the then prevailing style. So Walt never used him for actual animation, just for inspirational sketches, which was a very clever use of the man because he did brilliant, beautiful stuff. Nobody like him, ever, *nobody*.

Ham Luske

Long before Ham Luske ever applied for a job in Hollywood, he wanted to be an animator. He had worked up in San Francisco, I think, on a newspaper. Without the least bit of knowledge of animation, he made a film pencil test of a player serving a tennis shot which was just great. I imagine he had probably copied live action in some way but he never disclosed it.

Ham was a totally dedicated guy, but he was such a worrier. I wonder if worrying about the future of animation after Walt's death might not have contributed to his fatal attack of heart failure.

He was, I would say, directly responsible for the animation of Snow White herself. This was the first time anything had been done that was beautiful in simple analysis of the action. It was done over live action, but if you could have seen what he did, taking the figure of Marjorie Belcher (she was dressed in costume, of course), making the head almost twice as large and cutting down the waist and reducing it to a cartoon format. This was a big job; he had to do thousands of these. Everybody has to give him credit for that. What he did was really a sensational advance in the history of animation for serious human characters. When the Fleischers did the clown in rotoscope, they didn't change the photographed image much. It was practically Dave's proportions, head and hat, clown suit, everything. Simplified, of course. But Ham did more than that. He changed the proportions so it became a cartoon-proportioned figure. Study her if you get a chance some time and see if you can tell how many heads tall she is. Instead of a human being a normal eight heads tall, she is about five heads tall, so it all had to be in different proportion. He did a great job on it; it was moreover a big advance over *The Goddess of Spring*. He told me that his wife acted the Goddess in that cartoon for him, but they didn't photograph and draw over it so it came out pretty terrible. But then none of us were very proud of our animation in that picture. I animated Pluto, the devil character, and I didn't do it over any live action either. I just kind of acted it out myself and then drew it. It wasn't very good either.

Ham became a director in his last 10 or 15 years. Walt took him off the last cartoon features and put him on animated TV shows. And he wasn't very happy about it. But no doubt about it, Ham Luske was one of the greats.

Fred Moore

The story about Freddy Moore is that he came to Walt asking for a job, and when Walt asked him if he had any samples, Freddy fished around in his pocket and brought out a few crumpled pieces of paper. And when Walt saw what was on them, they looked so good that he was hired right on the spot. I don't think Freddy had any formal training in drawing, but Walt was very interested in hiring him because he was a natural draftsman, absolutely natural, it flowed right out of his pencil. I think that was the trouble with Freddy, it came too easy to him.

© Walt Disney Productions

Fred Moore at work on Pinocchio.

© Walt Disney Productions

Fred Moore (left) and Ward Kimball were caricatured in animation by Kimball for Nifty Nineties, *a 1941 Mickey Mouse cartoon.*

With the possible exception of Grumpy (who was mostly Bill Tytla's creation) and Dopey (who was Art Babbitt's), the Dwarfs in *Snow White* would not have been the same without Freddy. He keyed them for what they became. Fred was great until he died prematurely, indirectly the result of an auto accident. I never saw so many people at anybody's funeral. He was another one of Walt's paladins.

He was never a director. His contribution was in the creation of characters, his style of drawing and his brilliant animation. They went hand in hand. Freddy was also very good at drawing girls, beautiful, sexy little women. But they all seemed innocent and childlike, again a reflection of his gentleness, although he was a plenty virile guy. He fell out of the window at the big brawl we had to celebrate *Snow White*. He fell out of a second story window and luckily landed in a bush; wasn't hurt at all. This was at the famous saturnalia that took place on Walt's bounty. This sensational all-night affair, where drinks were on the house and free rooms for all. Oh boy! Walt never did that again! I myself didn't stay; I left at sundown but heard all about it later.

Perce Pearce

Of all the people that passed through the Disney studios during Walt's lifetime, no one had the knack of getting along

© Walt Disney Productions

Perce Pearce in the nineteen-fifties. The photograph on the desk is of Robert Newton, who was Long John Silver in Treasure Island *(1950). Pearce produced that film, Disney's first feature entirely in live-action.*

with Walt like Perce Pearce. This plus a certain creative ability and a flare for organization made him very popular with Walt. For instance, it was he who suggested putting an elevator in the new Burbank studio when we went over the plans. This was unheard of—an *elevator* in a *cartoon studio*!

I think Perce must have had a lot of business experience. He had this real sober, pontifical manner and all the cliche expressions like, "seeing eye to eye," and other banalities. Strangely enough, this went over really big with Walt. Perce was given, (which was a strange departure) a certain independent autonomy over *Bambi*. Walt shifted the responsibility to him and told him to move his staff to a building which the studio had rented over on Seward Street in Hollywood. They called it the Seward Street Studio; it's still there, although Disney doesn't own it. Well, there Perce was, and he sat down with his staff and started grinding out *Bambi*.

Down at Seward Street, they did storyboards, of course, and they did a lot of experimental stuff, too. I remember Perce showing us how he had gotten the delightful dappled shadows on Bambi when he lay under a bush. Very complicated stuff. Real great. And I believe they did a little animation there also. But the main animation was done principally back at the Burbank studio, after the storyboards had been okayed down there.

Perce had a lot to do with *Snow White*, which will show in his record, and with "Sorcerer's Apprentice," which he produced. After the war, when the studio decided to use up its impounded European currency (you couldn't get the money out, you had to leave it there and invest it after the war), Perce was sent over to produce a series of live-action pictures. This was the first serious attempt at live-action features by Disney. He made *Rob Roy* and *The Sword and the Rose*. I don't think they were financially successful; anyway, Perce stayed in England. On the opening day of Disneyland in 1955, we got word that poor Perce had suddenly died of a heart attack at our London office. He just sat down at his desk and died. I remember he used to tell me how he played Walt like a fish on a line, letting him think he was having his way but just when the right moment came to gently pull him back. At least he believed he was doing this.

Perce was a guy who got on your nerves at meetings because he was so very deliberate. He never blabbered nervously like some people. He'd button his coat and suck his pipe and look at the ceiling for a minute (I don't know how he got away with it) and make you wait for an answer and then finally say, "Uh-huh." He had this image all worked out, and Walt apparently loved it. Yes, he had a very successful career at Disney's, which only began to lessen after those rather unfortunate live-action pictures. I think Walt blamed him for their lack of success.

In the early nineteen-thirties, when this photo was taken, the Max Fleischer studio was located in the building in the center of this photo, behind the Chevrolet sign — 1600 Broadway, in Manhattan.

REVIEWS

Betty Boop's Biographers

By MICHAEL DOBBS

Leslie Cabarga's* The Fleischer Story *was published by Nostalgia Press in 1976, during* Funnyworld*'s three-year hiatus from publication, and no review of the book has ever appeared in the magazine. Since the book was published, Max Fleischer's son and daughter, Richard Fleischer and Ruth Kneitel, have authorized a biography of their father to be written by Michael Dobbs. Dobbs has submitted the following critique of Cabarga's book.

Originally announced as *the* definitive book on the cartoonists who gave us Betty Boop, Popeye, and Superman, *The Fleischer Story* is nothing more than a collection of memorabilia strung together by a crudely written and poorly researched text.

When Max Fleischer died in 1972 at the age of 89, he had been all but forgotten. Few people realize that Max Fleischer invented the Rotoscope, the device that made *The Lord of the Rings* possible, produced the first sound cartoons four years before *Steamboat Willie*, and was one of the first people to realize the educational potential of animation. Fleischer was the head of the second largest animation studio in the world and produced some of the most popular cartoon series.

However, as Erich von Stroheim pointed out, "You're only as good in Hollywood as your last picture," and Max Fleischer left the industry in disgrace. Although he did not sink completely out of sight he never attained the importance in the field he once had. Many people felt that this book would answer questions about Fleischer's career and how he lost his studio at the height of his success.

However, Cabarga failed in clearing up matters and only succeeded in making Fleischer's story more confused than ever.

Researching a biography is a slow, painstaking process if the subject is no longer living. Friends and family must be interviewed and their cooperation can make or break a project. The Fleischer family has seen Max's reputation ruined by inexperienced writers who have only repeated the rumors written by others. Although Max's daughter and grandson helped Cabarga, Richard Fleischer did not, and Cabarga did not have the raw information he needed for his project.

Max Fleischer came to this country when he was five years old, from Austria. Ruth Kneitel, his daughter, has shown me his sketchbooks from age 13, and Max showed an early dedication to art. After attending high school, Max started working on *The Brooklyn Eagle*, where he did comic strips and advertising artwork.

Max had another love besides art. He was fascinated by machines and technology. Animation was the logical combination of these two loves. Max patented the Rotoscope in 1917. Originally conceived as a way to reduce the cost of animation by speeding up production, the Rotoscope proved to be a useful tool in animation, but an expensive one.

Cabarga's book really doesn't deal with the family nature of the Fleischer operation. Max Fleischer was partners with his brother Dave and their personal problems adversely affected the studio. Perhaps the frustration of constantly being in his brother's shadow led Dave to make the claims and remarks that have confused people about who did what at the studio. Dave claimed to be an accomplished artist (which he was not), inventor of the Rotoscope (which he was not) and prime creative force behind the various cartoon series. Cabarga does nothing to put these claims to rest because the "man-behind-the-man" theme suits the pseudo-exposé tone of the book.

Dave Fleischer was a fine gag man and a frustrated musician; just how much real directing Dave did is difficult to determine. He frequently directed the soundtrack sessions, but left much of the visual direction up to the head animators. Myron Waldman, a long-time Fleischer animator, told me that Dave would come around and flip the work an animator had done for the day. One day Myron substituted a stack of blank paper for his day's work and told a displeased Dave that that was his work for tomorrow!

Max Fleischer lost his studio because he relied on financing from Paramount and because he did not own his own films. Although Max had originally acted as an independent producer, once he went to Paramount to borrow funds to build a new studio in Miami, Florida, his autonomy was over. Paramount forced him to produce a feature film, *Gulliver's Travels*, when the studio was moving, and pushed the *Superman* series on him as well. He had no bargaining power with Paramount, which undoubtedly wanted his studio. Paramount's opportunity came when *Hoppity Goes to Town* tailed at the box

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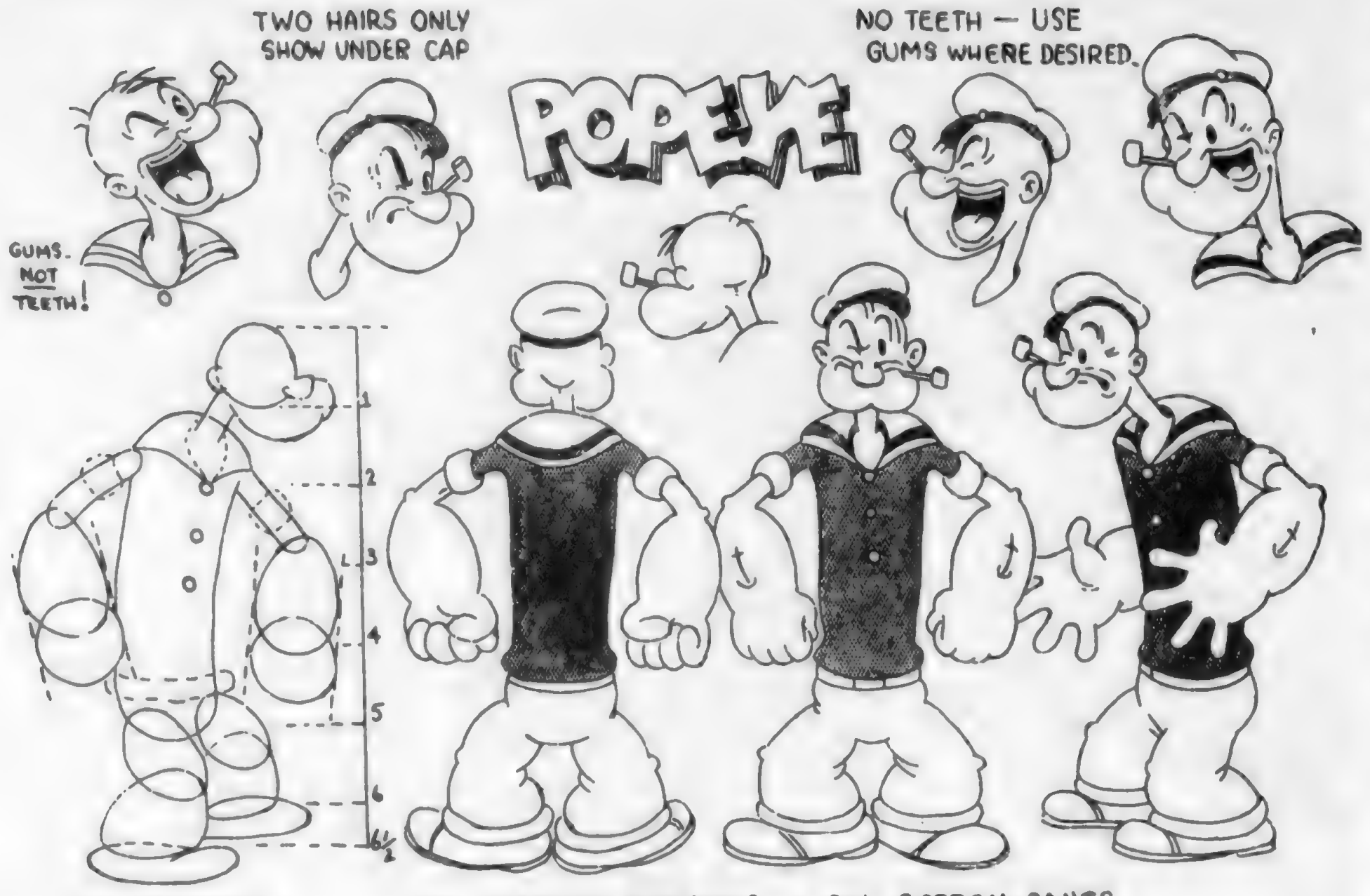

A Popeye model sheet from the mid-thirties.

office. Max had borrowed money for the film and despite the fact that Paramount gave the film a fair pre-release build-up, it died in the theaters. In order to pay Paramount, Max was forced to sell his studio. Paramount immediately dropped everyone's salaries and re-named the operation Famous Studios, after its sheet-music division.

The story of Max Fleischer and his career in animation deserves much better treatment than Cabarga gave it. Cabarga apparently put a fair amount of work into his book, but he stopped where many film books stop. He tells his readers anecdotes, and describes plots, but he was not able to tell us more. His tone throughout the book alternates between being flip and reverent. He turned a very interesting story about a man who was a "traditional" American success story until his poor business

Dave Fleischer — who died last summer at the age of 84 — at the Fleischer studio in Miami.

sense destroyed him, into a thumbnail sketch purporting to be an exposé.

The book's fine illustrations were largely supplied by John Walworth, a very gracious man who saved everything from his time at the studio. Cabarga did not acknowledge Walworth's invaluable contribution to his book — a major oversight.

Visually, the book is a patchwork of mis-matched type-faces and horrendously poor layout. Why there is a picture of an old man at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is known only to Cabarga.

As I said earlier, biographies are difficult to write. A person shows different faces and all biographies must consider the "*Citizen Kane* effect." Generally, though, my research has shown that Max Fleischer was an

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"GULLIVER"
MODEL O.K.ED BY
NOTES:
IN MAKING FINAL DRAWINGS FROM ROTO TRACINGS -
① FIGURE SHOULD BE SLIGHTLY SLENDERIZED AT THE WAIST, AND SHOULDERS MADE A BIT MORE SQUARE.
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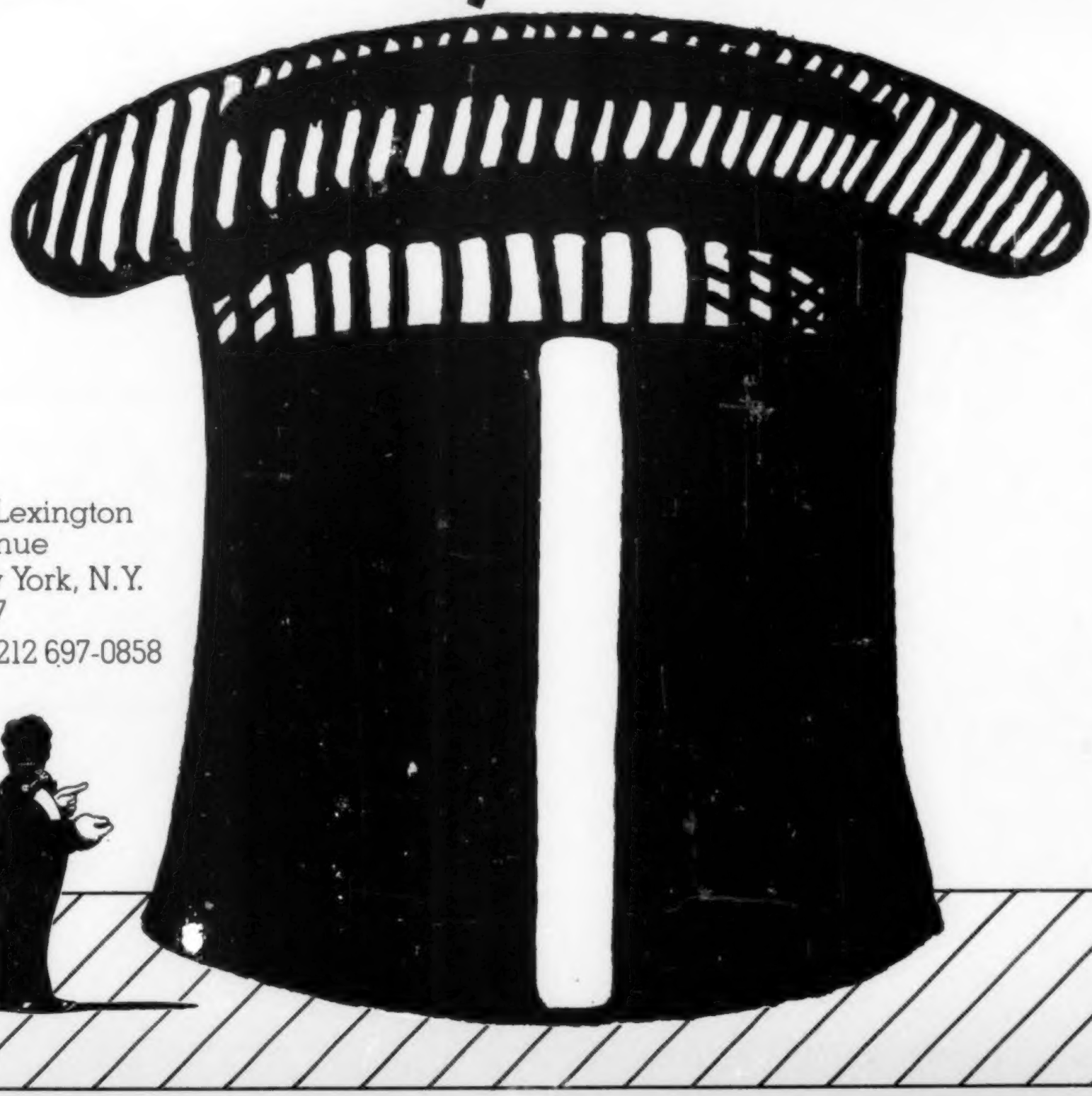
A model sheet for Gulliver's Travels, *the first of the Fleischer studio's two feature cartoons.*

① NINE BEAT WALK IS STANDARD
② NOTE WIDE FOLLOW THRU ON ARMS
③ NOTE DRAGGING ACTION AS FOOT PICKS UP
④ CARRY MASS ON MOUSTACHE
⑤ NOTE FOOT FLIP ON DRG 18
⑥ CARRY EXPRESSION LINES AROUND EYES CAREFULLY - DONT LET THEM FLASH ON AND OFF
⑦ DONT LOSE CHARACTER OF MOUTH!
⑧ STUDY CONSTRUCTION CHART
⑨ FIGURE PAN MOVES FROM CENTER OF FOOT (IN ANY POSITION)
WIFFLE PIFFLE
MODEL FOR
PAN WALK
MOVING 1/8 INCH
DRAWINGS 1 TO 18
AND REPEAT
© FLEISCHER STUDIOS
(18)
#1 FOLLOWS

innovator whose biggest problem was that he was a poor businessman. While he was against unions and used strike-breaking tactics during the lengthy walkout by half his studio in 1937, he was essentially a fair man who never laid one person off during the Depression. He seemed to care about his workers. Jack Mercer calls him "The Godfather," because if you had a problem, you went to see Max about it. Shamus Culhane remembers being lectured about the importance of saving by Max when he was a young animator. Max would oversee his studio's productions, never allowing one film to leave without his preview. He frequently made contributions when developing new series and it was Max who convinced King Features to let him have the motion picture rights to *Popeye*. I could go on about him, but I suppose that will be my book's purpose.

Harold Friedman Consortium



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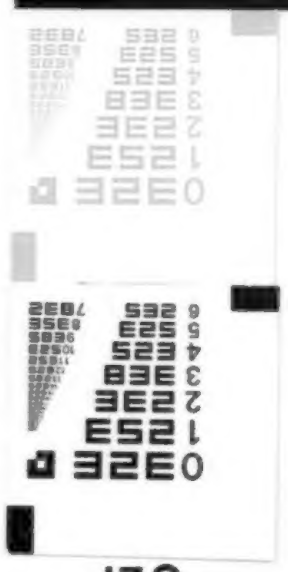

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